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# MACHIAVELLI AND THE MODERN STATE

CHAPTERS ON HIS "PRINCE," HIS USE OF HISTORY  
AND HIS IDEA OF MORALS, BEING THREE  
LECTURES DELIVERED IN 1899 AT  
THE ROYAL INSTITUTION

BY

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*Unius tamen Machiavelli ingenium non contemno, acre, subtile, igneum.*

JUSTUS LIPSIUS Lectori (Politicoꝝ libri VI).

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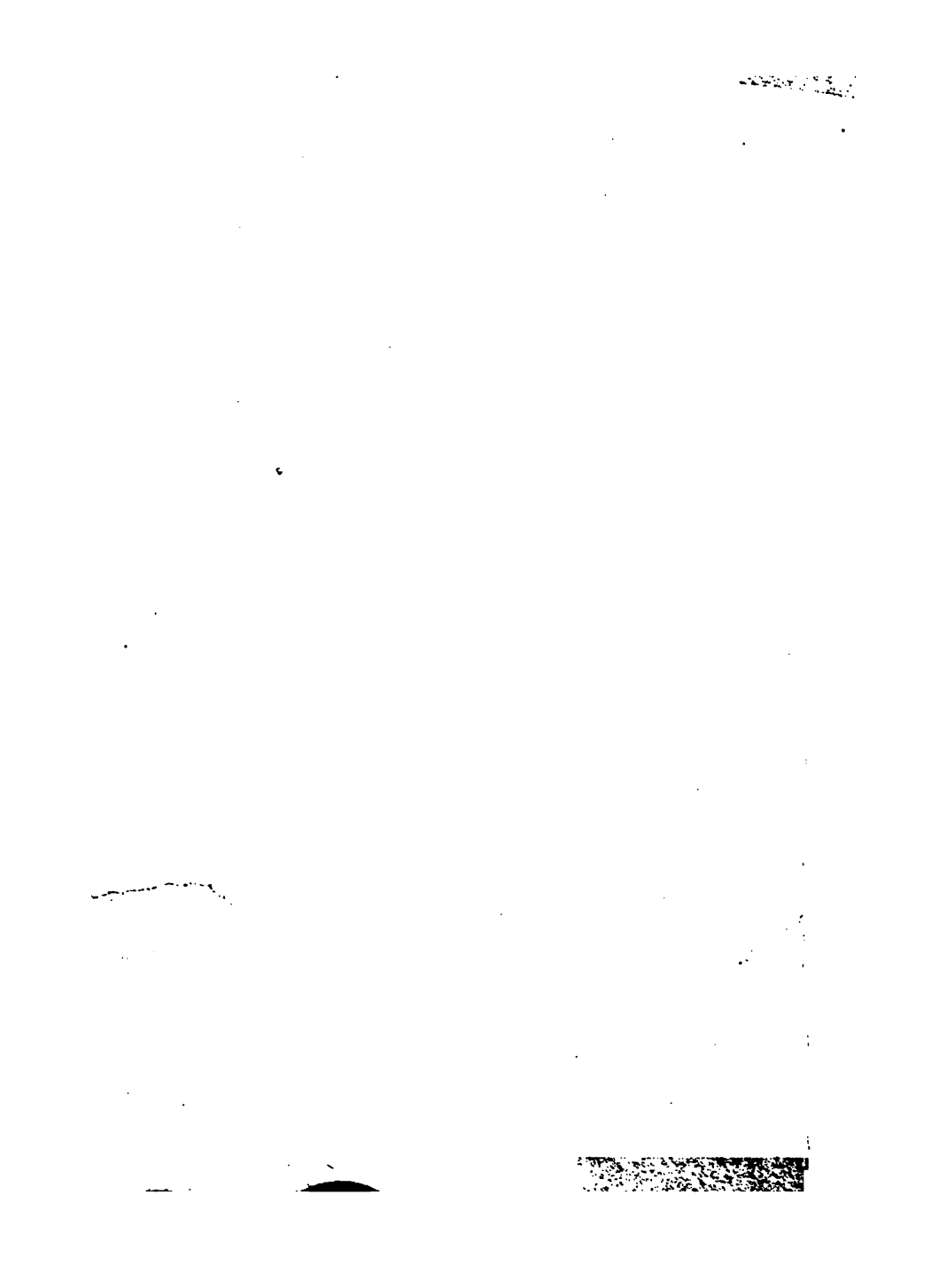
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**DEDICATED**  
**TO**  
**MRS. ALBERT DICEY**  
**IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE**  
**OF HER FRIENDSHIP**



## AUTHOR'S NOTE

*The three chapters here published were delivered in London as lectures at the Royal Institution on the last three Saturdays of April, 1899, and again late in 1900 before the Young Men's Christian Association in San Francisco. Their preparation began in 1897, and a large fraction of their substance was delivered in a lecture given in that year at Toynbee Hall, and repeated a year later, after some revision, at the Working Men's College in Great Ormond Street. For publication I have endeavored to divest them of the lecture form, and hope in a measure to have succeeded.*

*The Appendix, On Various Substitutes for Machiavelli, was a part of the second lecture, On Machiavelli's Use of History. The argument on this topic, substantially recast and very materially amplified since the delivery of the lectures, is contained in the second chapter, while pains have been bestowed on preparing notes to all the three chapters alike. In view of the expenditure of time required for verifying the slightest reference to any work of Machiavelli, and of the generous allowance of the publishers, all passages referred to have been printed in full when they were important, with a view to establishing the line of argument.*

*Although alone answerable for the present publication, I venture upon it with fewer misgivings because of indispensable suggestions and indulgent sympathy lavished upon it by my friend Mr. A. L. Smith of Balliol College. Also from Mr. E. Armstrong of Queen's College, University Lecturer in Foreign History, I have had generous and illuminating criticism.*

*It is impossible to write upon Machiavelli without running most seriously into Professor Villari's debt. My own sole and slender chance of escaping bankruptcy in this regard must be such references to his monumental Life and Times of Machiavelli as are to be found in the notes. These by no means exhaust my obligations to that book, and of course leave quite untouched the indirect help derived from what Professor Villari has published on Savonarola. Nor can I afford to omit here a grateful mention of Mr. Burd's encyclopædic edition of The Prince. To the learning and acuteness of the proofreaders at the Athenæum Press I am particularly beholden, and also to the pains bestowed at that establishment upon the careful preparation of the present volume.*

LOUIS DYER.

BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD,  
June, 1904.

## PREFACE

(The immediate purpose with which Italians and Germans effected the great change in the European Constitution was unity, not liberty. They constructed not liberties but forces. Machiavelli's hour had come. — ACTON. X

The above dictum of the late Regius Professor of Modern History in Cambridge University figures at the head of the fifth chapter in the sixth book of Mr. John Morley's masterpiece, the *Life of Gladstone*.<sup>1</sup> Lord Acton's saying is one of the rare utterances of mark concerning Machiavelli accompanied by no quaver of indignation in the speaker's voice. Here is no implicit reprobation, nothing depriving Machiavelli of such benefit of clergy as he richly deserves for his skill in reading the needs of the common people at a time when no one else was heeding their straits, and for his fidelity to the Dantesque ideal of the free Roman people, who, "as long as their commonwealth was sustained in incorruption, could be overborne but never humbled, could exercise command but never wax insolent."<sup>2</sup> Liberty was Machiavelli's goal when circumstances allowed him to think of liberty; but political being had to come first. Even the Declaration of Independence fails to put liberty first. Before you can use liberty for the pursuit of happiness, you must have life. Of these three Machiavelli had to take the first and enlarge upon it as indispensable. His chief preoccupation was that there should exist an *Italy in being*, and X

<sup>1</sup> II, 338.

<sup>2</sup> For Machiavelli's words, see the end of note 2 on p. 83, chap. ii, below; cf. also pp. 55 f. in the same chapter.

his keenness for this, coupled with the desperate effort required to bring so novel an idea before the minds of his contemporaries, prompted the momentary dismissal of all other considerations. Much of the valuable cargo which under this stress he threw overboard in writing *The Prince* may be found in his other works. But what if this were not the case? Since the political, moral, and ecclesiastical situation in his time bristled with atrocities and called aloud for national forces to rescue the beginnings and foster the growth of national life, need Machiavelli be reprobated for sacrificing everything in order to show the way of strength?

Has not his procedure in this regard a sort of precedent in the *Republic* of Plato? Having decided that for the crisis of his day one consideration is unquestionably paramount, Machiavelli makes arbitrary exclusion of many things politically and socially indispensable. Just as the Platonic Socrates had his reasons for sketching in, to start with, the barest outline of a state, ἡ ἀναγκαιοτάτη πόλις,<sup>1</sup> which he subsequently altered and filled out, so Machiavelli in *The Prince* had abundant reason for leaving liberty, morals, and religion out of consideration, while patient readers of his longer works well know that he does not always neglect these vital concerns. Hence Lord Acton's laconic record of the Machiavelian consummations of the last half century in Europe is fairer and gives more insight than is yielded by Mr. Morley himself in an earlier chapter of the same biography.<sup>2</sup> Cavour had brought King Victor Emmanuel for the first time to Florence, then (March, 1860) newly annexed to Piedmont. Gladstone's biographer imagines the king's profound musings "at the tomb of Machiavelli, the champion of principles . . . to guide that armed reformer, part fox part lion, who should one day come to raise up an Italy one and independent. The Florentine secretary's orb," Mr. Morley

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, 369 d, *ad fin.*

<sup>2</sup> II, 9.

adds, "never quite sets, and it was now rising to a lurid ascendant in the politics of Europe for a long generation to come, lighting up the unblest gospel that whatever policy may demand justice will allow." The same deep-seated abhorrence for Machiavelli's mind and mood reappears once more toward the end of the same volume,<sup>1</sup> where Mr. Morley closes his plea for Gladstone's Midlothian eloquence by saying "One should take care lest in quenching the spirit of Midlothian, we leave sovereign mastery of the world to Machiavelli." Gladstone seems to have disliked Machiavelli to such a degree that he refused to converse about him with his biographer;<sup>2</sup> but neither in the course of his innumerable speeches nor in the mass of his voluminous correspondence has the "great commoner" anywhere come so near as his apologist of Midlothian to giving serious countenance to Butler's humorous derivation from Machiavelli's Christian name of "our domestic title for the devil."

But is it true in the long run — is it true at the present moment — that the cause of liberty in Europe has suffered a setback through the consolidation of Italy and the concentration of national life and force in Germany? A recrudescence of national antagonisms, a certain quarrelsomeness of tone in the public prints of Europe and America, has been noticeable, and is doubtless connected in some way with the spoliation of Denmark and the Franco-Prussian war. The appropriation of Nice and Savoy by Napoleon III was an episode in the unification of Italy which, like the spoliation of Denmark, profoundly irritated English and American public opinion, not to speak of the bitter resentment which it inevitably produced in Italy or of French exasperation about Alsace-Lorraine. Italian bitterness of feeling in 1860 was all the more intense, no doubt, because

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 594.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 518.



the peace of Villafranca came upon the Italians as a surprise just when they were fullest of gratitude for the generosity of their French liberator. But this cloud had its silver lining. As an offset against this and other lurid aspects of the great crisis from which emerged—as if in answer to the closing adjuration of Machiavelli's Prince—the being of a new nation, Italy strong and united, we have the example, unique in modern times, of extraordinary self-command and political sagacity shown by whole Italian communities, after Cavour's indignant resignation in 1859. Cavour returned to the helm in eight months; “but in the interval,” says Mr. Morley, “the movement went forward as if all his political tact, his prudence, his suppleness, his patience, and his daring had passed into the whole population of central Italy. For eight months after Villafranca, it seemed as if the deep and politic temper that built up the old Roman commonwealth were again alive in Bologna, Parma, Modena, Florence.”<sup>1</sup> It is not in reason, when confronted by this unique historical fact, to withhold the praise that is rightly due Machiavelli, who, taking his cue from Dante, first discovered to the modern Italian world this Roman spirit of political wisdom in his *Discourses on Livy*. The most rudimentary requirements of fair play forbid us to have nothing but blame for the Florentine secretary, because the maxims of the Prince were acted upon in wresting provinces from Italy and were adapted to the Bismarckian policy of “blood and iron.” May we not also read in the splendidly politic behavior of the northern Italians the real triumph of Machiavelli's ideal, and forget the abysmal nightmares of *The Prince* along with the miscarriages which preceded the birth of an Italy in being?

But, indeed, all this is very little more than saying that the substance of Machiavelli's thought is not fairly or

adequately represented by *The Prince*. This is what Mr. Morley seems disinclined to allow, or if he allows it, he only occasionally bears it in mind. A case where he has forgotten it occurs in an early chapter of the *Life of Gladstone*.<sup>1</sup> Giving a vivid summary of the great man's miscellaneous reading at the age of twenty-five, Mr. Morley says: "He [Gladstone] studies political science in the two great manuals of the old world and the new, in the *Politics* of Aristotle and *The Prince* of Machiavelli." It is really time to enter once again Lord Macaulay's caveat against the habitual injustice done to modern political science, and to Machiavelli, its founder, by separating *The Prince* from the *Discourses on Livy*. Neither of these alone, but both together, are required in order to constitute a modern equivalent of anything like sufficient weight to be set over against the *Politics* of Aristotle. It is further true that a study of the *Art of War* and the *Florentine History* in connection with *The Prince* and the *Discourses* yields a still more adequate view of Machiavelli's thought; but this is so only as a more complete appreciation of Aristotle's *Politics* would be gained by attention to certain parts of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, and by reading, if only we had it to read, the whole of his *Constitutions*. Even Mr. Gladstone might have consented to talk about Machiavelli if he had read more of him than *The Prince*.

If, then, we take *The Prince* and the *Discourses on Livy* as presenting our author's science of the modern state, one striking fact perhaps requires more attention than it has commonly received, — I mean the extent to which Machiavelli, modern though his thought is rightly acknowledged to be, is still haunted by general principles borrowed largely from Dante, — principles which, admirable though they are in Dante, become incongruous and antiquated

<sup>1</sup> I, 117.

where they lurk behind our author's modern views, because he scarcely realizes them and has never thought them out. He certainly goes over to the schoolmen, though doubtless without being aware of it, when in his *Discourses* he insists that a state is kept in being by periodical and providential reversions toward its earliest and rudimentary constitution. This generalization he nowhere attempts to prove by syllogistic demonstration. The utmost that he does for it, beyond his characteristic appreciation of the reversion by Saints Francis and Dominic to the soundness and simplicity of the earlier Christians, is to give it the doubtful support of Roman instances and to associate it with an argument drawn from the analogy of medicine.<sup>1</sup> Had he ventured upon a searching justification of it, he might have been entangled in the mazes of an argument like that used in the second canto of Dante's *Paradiso* to explain the real cause of the spots in the moon. Happily, indeed, for both the novelty and the science of the new reason of state, its founder's thought depended not upon metaphysical principles or medical analogies, but upon his incisive grasp of concrete facts, for observing which he was exceptionally trained, circumstanced, and endowed. What he has said of the people<sup>2</sup> is true of his own mental processes. He very easily went wrong about a general proposition, and yet of the several particulars which it sums up he may upon occasion judge soundly and aptly. He was saved from the confusion of mind involved in some of his antiquated general principles by a species of intellectual myopia. Nevertheless, one inevitable result of the latent mediævalism of his mental furniture was that he ever remained as inaccessible to every sign of continuous progress in human affairs as he could have been if he had lived in the time of Peter Lombard or Albert the Great.

<sup>1</sup> See below, chap. ii, p. 104, and chap. iii, pp. 126-132.

<sup>2</sup> See below, chap. ii, pp. 102 f.

## PREFACE

No doubt it is idle to find fault with a thinker for not harboring a thought whose advent in the world of ideas came long after his death; but still some conceptions are of far greater importance than others. When, therefore, we subtract so all-embracing an idea as that of progress, we cannot suppose that the whole range of association of which this leading thought has become a center in the case of most modern political thinkers was a mere blank in the mind of Machiavelli. In place of our idea of progress there lurked a half-acknowledged schoolman's notion of formal cause, or natura naturans, such as Beatrice appears to imply in the abstruse argument at the end of the second canto of the *Paradiso*. This remains true, although Machiavelli's preoccupation with concrete instances and proneness to stop short with practicable maxims, rarely argued out to their ultimate principles — in short, his intellectual myopia — seldom allow the latent power of these lurking medievalisms to appear.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, M. Jourdain was probably not more amazed when told that he talked prose than Machiavelli might have been to hear it said that he was in any way inoculated with the leading thoughts of Albertus Magnus or St. Thomas Aquinas. But Dante was his favorite author, and these general conceptions were smuggled into his mind at unawares while he was in a glow of impassioned excitement. Such crises were rare in his experience, no doubt, but none the less real and all the more fruitful on that account. The best proof of this will, I conceive, be found in his crucial conception of *virtù*, the most untranslatable and the most indispensable word in all his vocabulary. Nevertheless *virtù* is a word which could never have withstood the hard work to which he harnessed it, never have come out scathless from the evil associations into which he forced it, if he had not taken it outright from the sublime

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<sup>1</sup> See below, chap. ii, pp. 102 f.

discourse of the Emperor Justinian in the sixth canto of Dante's *Paradiso*.<sup>1</sup> It is hardly necessary to add that Dante did not invent his notion of political *virtù*, but found it or the rudiments of it in the schoolmen, especially perhaps in

<sup>1</sup> See lines 34-114. The whole of this magnificent passage is a highly intensified distillation of Ghibelline enthusiasms, a half-epic, half-lyric song of songs to the glory and honor of the *virtù* (political genius) of Rome, which is represented under the figure of the eagle. How manifestly Machiavelli's notion of *virtù* derives from this passage will, I think, appear to any who will read it in connection with the note in chap. i, pp. 7 f., below. Here is not the place to deal adequately with the authenticity of the *Discorso ovvero Dialogo in cui si esamina se la lingua in cui scrissero Dante, Boccaccio e il Petrarca, si debba chiamare Italiana, Toscana o Fiorentina*. This rambling and pedantic essay is upon a topic on which it would be surprising to find Machiavelli bestowing much pains, since it did not belong to the burning questions of his day. What least of all suggests Machiavelli is the style, the structure, and the vocabulary of the *Dialogo*. Such opinions as Machiavelli has expressed in passing are diametrically opposed to those of the *Dialogo* upon the subject-matter involved as well as upon the constitution of Florence. It is hardly conceivable that the author of *The Prince*, the *Discourses on Livy*, and the *Florentine History* could have written: "Ma la fortuna, per farlo mendace [referring to Dante] e per ricuoprire colla gloria sua [referring to Florence] la calunnia falsa di quello, l'ha continuamente prosperata, e fatta celebre per tutte le provincie del mondo e condotta al presente in tanta felicità, e si tranquillo stato, che se Dante la vedesse, o egli accuserebbe se stesso, o, ripercosso da' colpi di quella sua innata invidia, vorrebbe, essendo risuscitato, di nuovo morire." All this is either in flat contradiction to Machiavelli's science of the modern state and categorically refuted by Machiavelli's various accounts of Florence as he knew her, or else Polidori is right in saying that it refers to the condition of Florence after Machiavelli died. There is no explanation of it which is compatible with Machiavelli's authorship of the *Dialogo*. Furthermore, Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentia* is quoted by its proper Latin title in the *Dialogo*, which therefore can hardly have been written before 1577, the date of the first (Paris) edition. This was printed from the only manuscript then known to exist, so that the chances are very much against Machiavelli's ever having had that work before him. He was apparently not in the habit of consulting or acquiring manuscripts.

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St. Thomas Aquinas. That Machiavelli's indebtedness to Dante in respect of his conception of *virtù* should be so unmistakable seems the more startling because our author himself has been at some pains to associate his use of *virtù* with the nomenclature of medical diagnosis borrowed so continually in all his works and based on a far too uncritical and literal belief that every possible state is a *body politic*.<sup>1</sup> But after all the medicine of those days had many points of contact with scholasticism. This fact is burlesqued by Molière in the inimitable reason given by his "Bachelierus" when asked "quare opium facit dormire?" The learned answer runs :

"Quia est in eo  
Virtus dormitiva,  
Cujus est natura  
Sensus assoupire."

So far the proofs alleged in maintaining the latent mediævalism of Machiavelli's thought have been proofs by indirection, but further proofs are still to come. He himself has betrayed now and again by strange hints, suggestions, and explanations the existence in his thought of a puzzling residuum of unrealized mediæval mysticism, — most especially where he talks of "the intelligences of the air."<sup>2</sup> Whole reaches of our author's mind, corresponding to those in our more modern mental experience whose center lies around some conception of human perfectibility and political progress, were brooded over by a vague, half-popular, half-scholastical mysticism, which operated like a species of intellectual inertia or paralysis in many cases, — cases where his keenness was not roused and his alertness lacked the stimulus, the visual appeal, of dramatic acts or electrifying personalities.<sup>3</sup> For instance, Machiavelli could find

<sup>1</sup> See below, chap. iii, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> See below, chap. ii, p. 54, note 2.

<sup>3</sup> See below, chap. i, pp. 21-37.

## PREFACE

neither stimulus nor appeal in any of the fascinating activities of Florentine or Italian commerce.<sup>1</sup> In this regard he was far less keen and observant than Guicciardini, and he recognized as little as Plato "that trade is one of the great motive powers of the state and of the world."<sup>2</sup> Here, too, his exclusive outlook upon republican, as contradistinguished from imperial, Rome<sup>3</sup> confirmed him in error, since all definite records of trade are irrecoverably lost from the annals of early Rome. The commercialism of Florence, though it accounted for some of the promising symptoms of the body politic, — symptoms, too, which Machiavelli in rare moments of unguarded optimism hailed with delight, — always defied his comprehension. He regarded it with cold aloofness and condemned the resulting affluence as one of the agencies which sapped the vigor of the Florentine commonwealth and made his countrymen equally ready to buy peace or to purchase provinces.<sup>4</sup> This inability to grasp the political bearings of money and of money getting developed in him further limitations and led him into serious scientific errors. He argues most strenuously that men and men only, to the complete exclusion of money, are the sinews of war, utterly ignoring the conditions created by commercialism. In spite of his own triumphant demolition of all current arguments for employing alien mercenaries, he could not see that the days of brigandage and piracy were numbered, and therefore insisted that if once you provided *men* they would help themselves to money, which it

<sup>1</sup> See below, chap. ii, p. 83 and note 1; chap. iii, p. 117 and note 2.

<sup>2</sup> Jowett, *Republic*, II, xxxvi, Introduction.

<sup>3</sup> He criticises sharply the payment of ransoms in imperial times (see below, chap. iii, pp. 136 f.), but never so much as glances at fiscal or economic questions in Roman history.

<sup>4</sup> See in his *Florentine History* a passage at the close of the first book on the growing preponderance of merchandising.

was therefore idle to think of providing. His whole egregious overestimate of the Swiss would have been impossible, if ever he had brought himself — even momentarily after Guicciardini's fashion — to regard Florence as a commercial commonwealth, and to see that commerce had a great and growing part to play in modern politics.

After these general considerations, it will be well to revert to Plato's sketch of the barest outline of a state, cited above as a precedent for Machiavelli's highly specified account of the political power unscrupulously consolidated by the Prince. The parallel suggested must not be pressed. The Platonic Socrates of the second book of the *Republic*, for the sake of simplicity in argument, begins by constructing what his interlocutors laugh at as a "city of pigs"; but in order to bring in the various complications needed for a completed political existence, the bare outline thus drawn by no means requires to be effaced; it requires only to be filled in. On the other hand, it is by no means clear how the strong state consolidated by Machiavelli's Prince could be transformed into a free republic, fashioned on the lines which, in an unguarded moment, Machiavelli suggests as possible for Tuscany.<sup>1</sup> Here, indeed, lies the almost insuperable difficulty in drawing any parallel between the modern political science of Machiavelli as embodied in *The Prince* and the *Discourses on Livy*, and that of Hellas as embodied in Plato's *Republic*. Unlike the Greeks Machiavelli never thinks of the problem as a whole. The details involved are perhaps more perplexing and complex than they were in the days of the Greco-Roman city-state. It has become almost more than human faculties can compass to look at the problem as a whole. However that may be, our author consciously chooses to deal with the subject

<sup>1</sup> See the striking passage from *Discourses*, I, iv, cited below in the note on p. 80, chap. ii.



piecemeal, and to write what shall prove in each special case of practicable service. He definitely prefers to be taken in tow by "the truth working its way through accomplished facts" and not to "deal with fictitious cases" like that of Plato's *Republic*.<sup>1</sup> The result is that he nowhere attempts, save by appeals to ancient Rome, to offer such a thing as a pattern of the best possible constitution. He is always giving us suggested political and constitutional compromises framed with reference to circumstances, various indeed, but invariably borrowed from actual experience and never purely hypothetical. Thus, instead of one more or less consistent view of justice and the whole duty of man, we have glimpses or dissolving views of the most contradictory underlying principles of law and right, according as our author solves in one direction or in another this or that actual political situation. Machiavelli was in fact continually occupying himself with precisely what Mr. Morley names as the main life occupation of Gladstone. Gladstone's task was to make the British Constitution work; Machiavelli's was to offer workable suggestions for use in an indefinite number of political situations. Each of his problems is best understood if likened to a chemical experiment; both what he puts in—in the way of suggested measures of power and lines of policy—and what comes out in the end, depend on the ingredients supplied by the actual situation in hand. Thus, he meets the accusation implied in calling his views an "unblest gospel" and in declaring that he believed that "whatever policy may demand justice will allow" by pleading that desperate situations require desperate remedies, and that if the political situations offered to his view in the Italy of his day had been more promising, he would probably have contrived to solve several of them in ways more consonant with the higher views of justice and of the whole duty of man.

<sup>1</sup> See below, chap. i, p. 14 and note.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The text used in quotations from *The Prince* is that of L. A. Burd (1891), taken by him from the edition published in 1849 at Capo di Lago. Extracts from the *Florentine History*, and from legatine dispatches and commissarial reports, are made from the six volumes which have so far appeared in the edition by L. Passerini, G. Milanesi, and P. Fanfani. This work is always referred to as P.M.<sup>1</sup> Quotations from the *Discourses* and the *Art of War* are taken from Machiavelli's complete works, printed at Florence in 1843 with no editor's name, by Alcide Parenti,<sup>2</sup> and the text given varies but little, if at all, from the 1849 edition. Dr. Moore's text of Dante (Oxford, 1895) has been used, and Guicciardini's *Opere Inedite* (Florence, 1857).

<sup>1</sup> Page references and Roman numerals in references to the *Florentine History* are from this edition.

<sup>2</sup> Roman numerals in references to letters and dispatches are from this edition.

# MACHIAVELLI AND THE MODERN STATE

## CHAPTER I

### THE PRINCE AND CÆSAR BORGIA

Machiavelli's life — Montaigne — The Renaissance and *The Prince* — Macaulay on Machiavelli — Machiavelli and Guicciardini — The instinct of personification — Lorenzo de' Medici — The Borgias — Machiavelli with Cæsar Borgia in the Romagnas — Anarchy in the Romagnas — Florence and Borgia — Machiavelli's dispatches — Machiavelli before and after his close view of Cæsar Borgia — His attempts at pacifying Pistoia and his plan for reforming the Val di Chiana — His second and longer stay with Borgia — The episode of Paolo Orsini — Machiavelli saw the Prince in Cæsar Borgia — His poor reading of human character — His sound knowledge of the people's needs — Cæsar Borgia a *deus ex machina*.

It was his world — the action of his world — from which alone Machiavelli could catch that heat which is light, and that light which, in his characteristic mood of keenness, is heat. Emphatically he was not a man to live in isolation like Michel de Montaigne. "I have ransacked my treasury," he says, in the dedication of *The Prince*, "and found among my rarities naught so dear to my heart or so high in my estimation as my grasp on the actions of great men, gained by long experience of modern and continual perusal of ancient affairs."<sup>1</sup> Still more pithily he utters the same thought

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<sup>1</sup> " . . . non ho trovato intra la mia suppellettile cosa quale io abbia più cara, o tanto stimi, quanto la cognizione delle azioni degli uomini grandi, imparata da me con una lunga sperienza delle cose moderne ed

in dedicating his *Discourses on Livy*: "Here have I put forth all that I . . . and all that I have learned by long conversancy with the affairs of the world, and by their continued perusal."<sup>1</sup> When we consider that Machiavelli was in no very strict sense of the word a man of letters, it may cross our minds that he would be prone to magnify the merits and the extent of his continual perusal of the ancients; since these classical pursuits were not really congenial to him, and were chiefly undertaken at the mature age of forty-five, for lack of something better to do, and at a time of disaster when he was longing for practical employment. Machiavelli's literary activity was in fact subsidiary to his ambition to play a useful part in affairs of state, and thus there is every reason for students of his writings to enter with particularity into the minutiae of those contemporary circumstances in which his thoughts were so constantly immersed.

The delineator of the Prince was born in 1469, two years before Warwick the King-maker died and Cardinal Wolsey was born, twenty-odd years before America was discovered. His life and Wolsey's almost synchronized, for Wolsey died at the age of fifty-nine, one year after falling from power in 1529, and Machiavelli died two years before that, in 1527, at the age of fifty-eight. The Florentine undersecretary was not, however, like Wolsey, a conspicuous figure in the eyes of

una continua lezione delle antiche; le quale avendo io con gran diligenza escogitate ed esaminate . . . mando alla Magnificenza Vostra."

<sup>1</sup> " . . . in quello io ho espresso quanto io so, e quanto io ho imparato per una lunga pratica e continua lezione delle cose del mondo."

contemporaries,—a fact which his biographers have good reason to declare. The first half of his life, indeed, is a blank, and we know practically nothing of him until he reached the age of twenty-nine, in 1499. The 19th of May in that year witnessed the execution of Savonarola by fire and the rope, and just one month later Niccolò Machiavelli was chosen secretary by the Great Council. Upon his confirmation by the Signory, his office was defined as that of secretary of the second chancery, — the ten in charge of home and war affairs, as well as of certain foreign affairs.<sup>1</sup> He thus became in some sort undersecretary of the state and war departments in a Florentine government which, having lifted no hand to rescue Savonarola, may be supposed to have viewed him and the Piagnoni, his partisans, with something of Machiavelli's contemptuous disfavor, although it did not venture so far as to come to an open breach with them. The last twenty-nine years of our author's life are fully recorded, since this, its closing half, was the whole of his public career. Only half of these years, however, were spent in office; the remainder having been for the most part engrossed in the production of those writings which made his peace with the offended Medici and which have won for him what Mr. Morley has called his "sinister renown."<sup>2</sup> Just about one year before his death a desperate crisis in Florentine affairs

<sup>1</sup> See Professor Villari's *Life and Times of Niccolò Machiavelli*, translated by Madame Linda Villari (London, 1892), Vol. I, p. 243, where the original documents concerning the appointment are for the first time correctly published.

<sup>2</sup> *Machiavelli*, The Romanes Lecture for 1897.

#### 4 MACHIAVELLI AND THE MODERN STATE

recalled him — this time under Medicean auspices — into active life for a few months of arduous and unrequited service. Twenty-nine years of unrecorded obscurity; fourteen years of inconspicuous but indispensable secretarial and ambassadorial activity, chiefly recorded in the correspondence of his chancery; fourteen years devoted to authorship on war, politics, and history; one closing year of feverish efforts toward reorganizing the defenses of Florence, — such in briefest outline was Machiavelli's life. Rome was sacked and pillaged in 1527, the year of his death; nor could the scatter-brained republic proclaimed at Florence in that year by enthusiasts, who mistrusted Machiavelli and remembered only Savonarola, long withstand the assaults of Charles V. In 1530, three years after Machiavelli's death, Florence capitulated, and the Medici were restored, — too late to reward the adhesion of Machiavelli by once more restoring him to office.

In attempting to appreciate Montaigne, — a man of the closet, a humanist who shirked affairs, — personal matters and details of private life are indispensable, nor are they lacking. "The matter of my book is my proper self," says Montaigne.<sup>1</sup> In Machiavelli's case the contrast is complete. We neither have nor require any clear account of him in private life or as a private man. He was in some sense a journalist before the invention of newspapers, and we concern ourselves with his private affairs as little as we attend to those of the unknown

<sup>1</sup> See the short preface, *Au Lecteur*, to his *Essays* (edited by Motheau & Jouaust, Paris, 1886), the closing sentence of which begins: "Ainsi, lecteur, je suis moy-mesmes la matière de mon livre."

author of a leader in the *Times*. In the dedication of *The Prince* and in that of *The Art of War*, Machiavelli unmistakably betrays a consciousness of this curious state of private isolation — I had almost said insulation, — in which he lived his whole life through. “No man shall account it presumptuous,” says Machiavelli, “for one of my low and inconsiderable estate to expatiate and lay down rules concerning the governance of princes. Just as your landscape painter of mountains takes his station low down in the plain . . . so must he be among the people who shall gauge aright the gifts of a prince.”<sup>1</sup> In a similar vein Machiavelli is at pains, in the preface to his *Art of War*, to forestall objections to his discoursing, as he does, upon that art without any professional knowledge. Personally and individually he himself always escapes us; he is always either on the heights whence the Prince, gazing down from his lofty outlook, can mark and appraise his subjects, or else he is looking up from the low station of the commonalty to mark from the same vantage ground of aloofness the good and bad points of princely magnificence and might.

Queen Hecuba, in the woeful play of Euripides, makes tragic appeal to Agamemnon, and exclaims in extremity, “Stand off, I say, as painters do; scan me, and

<sup>1</sup> “Nè voglio sia riputata presunzione se un uomo di basso ed infimo stato ardisce discorrere e regolare i governi dei principi; perchè, così come coloro che disegnano i paesi, si pongono bassi nel piano a considerare la natura de' monti e de' luoghi alti, e per considerare quella de' bassi si pongono alto sopra i monti; similmente a conoscere bene la natura de' popoli bisogna esser principe, ed a conoscer bene quella dei principi bisogna esser popolare.”



peruse my points of misery.”<sup>1</sup> In some such way as this the events in which Machiavelli moved made their appeal to him, and the impersonal manner of his observation is that of the artist's critical eye, not that of the philosopher or of the philanthropist. Montaigne, detached as he was from affairs, achieved the fullness of a genial and rounded self-knowledge. His life in private was nevertheless not one of obscurity like Machiavelli's. Machiavelli suppressed in his writings every detail of his own private existence, and found a quiet refuge where he dwelt in his own insignificance, which he used as a *camera obscura*. There he stood unseen but ever on the alert, scrutinizing keenly and eagerly the hurly-burly of contemporary events.

Professor Villari has said, and it is generally conceded, that *The Prince* contains the political programme of the Renaissance. So far as this is true, it results from the fact that Machiavelli himself, as we catch glimpses of him behind his written words, glows at his very heart's core with new and creative powers of imagination called into being by that dauntlessly fresh “outbreak of the human spirit” which in his day was crashing through “those limits which the religious system of the middle age imposed upon the heart and imagination”<sup>2</sup> alike of artists, poets, philosophers, and statesmen. Nowhere, indeed, was this bursting of barriers, this breaking of ancient bounds, fraught with a havoc more heartrending than in our author's own

<sup>1</sup> . . . ὡς γραφεὺς τ' ἀποσταθεὶς

ἰδοῦ με, κἀνάθρησκον οἱ' ἔχω κακά. — *Hecuba*, vv. 795 f.

<sup>2</sup> See Pater's *Renaissance*, Preface.

peculiar sphere of administration and kingcraft. Yet in his unnoted isolation, where he was often well-nigh smothered under the wreckage of collapsing polities and outworn policies, he, uplifted and made keen by the solemn spectacle of a new dispensation, breathed always the free and reviving airs of better days to come, and was quickened by that tonic excitement of mind through which the protagonists of the Renaissance braved everything to achieve the thrill of efficiency, the enlargement in activity of the soul, whereof the Florentine secretary dreamed and which he worshiped as *virtù*. Doomed in his own person to inglorious nullity, so much the more was he inwardly aflame with fires flashing from the electrifying deeds of his own contemporaries. For the age of the Renaissance swarmed with mysterious and attaching personalities, and Machiavelli would have been unworthy of his mates had his appreciation of genius<sup>1</sup> not been as generous as was their profusion of it.

<sup>1</sup> The early growth of his political thought must be studied in his dispatches, but the aftermath, garnered during weary years passed in a vain search for employment, may be seen in *The Prince*, where his instances are scrupulously modern, and alongside of it in the *Discourses*, where he tries, not always successfully, to deal chiefly with Roman parallels. Both have in common an appreciation of the power, for good as for harm, of men of genius. In the first book of the *Discourses* he takes up the purely internal affairs of Rome, and gives us a study of political genius (*virtù*) as exemplified in the constitutional history of Rome. In the second book his theme is the growth of the Roman empire, and he shows what political genius can achieve in war and diplomacy. But the third book is dedicated to an analysis of political genius as exemplified by the great men of Rome. Its opening chapter repays most attentive study, and several of its *obiter dicta* on the power of personality and the effectiveness of great examples deserve to rank with those of the

*The Prince*, then, incarnates this characteristically æsthetic attitude of its author, and contains, or rather impersonates, the Renaissance in politics, because Machiavelli's gifts were, *mutatis mutandis*, those of Leonardo and of various artists of the Renaissance. It is important to read something like this into what Machiavelli says about his "long conversancy with the affairs of the world (*pratica delle cose del mondo*)."

The governmental problem of that day was to fuse disjointed political fragments into nations and states. Henry VII had done this in England; Louis XI had achieved it in France; but in Italy the process, having begun, was arrested and defeated chiefly, Machiavelli maintains, by the temporal power of the popes. This frustrated consummation of Italian unity, deferred in the tangible realm of facts until the nineteenth century, was theoretically foreshadowed by Machiavelli's *Prince*, which thus appears to "take the duty" of a genuine historical event, serving in the sixteenth century for the unity of Italy achieved three centuries later, almost in our own day.

Platonic Socrates. A republic tends to degenerate, he argues; but this can be counteracted by providential misfortunes and by good laws as well as by religion. Having good laws to start with, a republic lives long by periodic reversion to its earlier soundness of constitution. This reversion may be secured by passing a good law "or equally well by the nativity of a good man, whose quality, shown in the example of his life and in his effective acts of virtue, may take the duty of a law." Republics are thus saved "o per virtù d'un uomo, o per virtù d'un ordine." Here it is perhaps not accidental that the man of genius is put first, because Machiavelli goes on to instance various Roman laws and institutions which were the salvation of Rome, the censorship, the tribunate, and others, "i quali ordini hanno bisogno d'esser fatti vivi dalla virtù d'un cittadino." So, after all, there is no salvation in politics without a man of genius.

Paradoxical though such a statement may sound, it gains color of reality when we note — as I am sure we must — that *The Prince* is not only drawn from the life in Italy, but has also certain accentuated peculiarities, belonging to contemporary Italian history, which are not appropriate in any but an Italian setting. With this reservation we must, I think, allow that *The Prince*, though Italian, is truly the political programme of the Renaissance at large. It certainly has received an amount and a sort of attention which on any other supposition would appear nothing short of ludicrous. Taking it, however, for a moment quite apart from the Renaissance, there is in it a certain commendable quality of briefness and concision, which is the soul of its political wisdom and has attracted generations of readers. Its twenty-six articles and chapters occupy in the printing rather less than thrice the space required by Macaulay's well-known essay on Machiavelli.

By this comparison no disparaging innuendo is intended. We of the English-speaking brotherhood have every reason for lively gratitude to Lord Macaulay for his essay. It was an Englishman, Cardinal Pole, to whom apparently it first occurred that Machiavelli, in his account of the politic falsehoods permissible to the Prince, sinned outrageously against the Anglo-Saxon virtue of truthfulness, — so outrageously that he must be pilloried by all right-minded men. Macaulay vividly showed that in these, as in other shocking utterances, Machiavelli but fixed the current morality of his day. Macaulay points out that in the Italy (he might almost have said the world) of the Renaissance Othello

could have awakened nothing but contempt and scorn; the plaudits and the sympathy would have gone to Iago, Macaulay was also at considerable pains to set before us the Machiavelli of the *Discourses on Livy*, and thus he helped greatly to clear our author of the unjustly extreme condemnation of Englishmen. Others have wrought on the same lines; but more than anything else the increasing complications of imperial sway have brought a juster and sounder appreciation of Machiavelli to the doors of Englishmen. And now that even America is shouldering the "white man's burden," we may be confident that full justice on both sides of our Atlantic is at hand for the writer of *The Prince*.

Returning now to our scrutiny of Machiavelli's public occupations, his conversance with the world's affairs, let us note how at the very outset he was sent on frequent embassies, though always in a subordinate capacity. Much of his private and most of his official correspondence is before us, and shows that from diplomatic experience he gathered a clear but not wholly correct notion of German politics, together with a fund of information about those fighters of every one's battles, the Swiss of his day. As to France Machiavelli was well informed, and his familiarity with the jealously defended prerogative of the French king lurks behind many a passage in *The Prince* concerning finance and justice. The Spaniards Machiavelli had always within his purview in their kingdom of Naples near by; but he never went to Spain.

This one fact constitutes a very material limitation of our author's "conversancy with the affairs of t

world." A political thinker in those days who had not seen Spain was like a constitutional theorist who should write in our own day without knowing England. He was not quite at home in the political world which surrounded him. Let us take, by way of a contrast in this particular with Machiavelli, the case of his critic and junior contemporary, Francesco Guicciardini. Both died at fifty-eight; the interval between their deaths was thirteen years. Guicciardini, the Florentine historian whom Macaulay styles the "Tuscan Thucydides," began political life as Florentine ambassador at the court of Ferdinand and Isabella, and was on intimate terms with Charles V. Something of Guicciardini's experience in the larger world of Spanish political life might have remedied several defects in Machiavelli, and would probably have relieved his *Prince* of certain provincial traits. To this summary of our author's outlook on the world beyond Italy may be added the remark that, his diplomatic experience having been in a subordinate capacity and on very short missions, Machiavelli had few or no opportunities either in Italy or in any other country for knowing great men of affairs. This puts him at a certain disadvantage as compared with Guicciardini, whose higher rank and more flourishing circumstances would in any case have given him a great social superiority over Machiavelli. This serious limitation in his experience also helps to account for the remarkable effect produced upon our author by Cæsar Borgia, the first and only man of real force with whom he came into anything like a close relation.

Moreover, the circumstance that Machiavelli never had anything like an intimate intercourse with any of the great personalities of his day—excepting only Cæsar Borgia, and, at a much later time, Guicciardini—is doubly unfortunate because, as we shall have opportunity to see when we examine his use of history, our author's conception of history was that of Plutarch rather than that of Thucydides, — biographical rather than philosophical. Indeed, we shall have no reason to forget that Machiavelli's characteristic mood made of the transformation in politics which paved the way for the modern state not a political readjustment but a political readjuster, — a person, not a process. Thus it came to pass that his book was called *The Prince*, and although Machiavelli himself once or twice refers to it as his book *On Principalities*, this but serves to show that he scarcely distinguished between the abstract system and the person concretely representing it. In fact, Machiavelli's instinctive personification of the terrible political problem of his day is but the most convincing among many proofs that he is indeed a worthy contemporary and kindred spirit of Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michaelangelo, and Botticelli.<sup>1</sup>

Another and parallel instance of Machiavelli's inveterate instinct for personification is his *Life of Castruccio*

<sup>1</sup> Any or all of these great artists Machiavelli must have met in the streets of Florence between 1483, when Raphael was born, and 1510, the year of Botticelli's death. Machiavelli was fourteen years senior to Raphael, who died seven years before him. Leonardo was seventeen years senior to Machiavelli, and died eight years before him. Michaelangelo survived him thirty-seven years, though but six years his junior. Botticelli died in 1510, seventeen years before Machiavelli.

*Castracani*, a minor work where he has at heart to show forth one of the *dicta* of his new military gospel, that the wars of the future will be fought by infantry, and that cavalry has ceased to be the important arm. Castracani, who flourished two hundred years before Machiavelli — in the days of Dante — was a brigand and a tyrant; but above and before all he was a successful leader of mercenaries, a *condottiere*, as the Italians of those days termed it. Castruccio, having seized upon Lucca, tyrannized over it, and was brought into contact with the neighboring commonwealth of Florence, over which he won several memorable victories. Being at Lucca in 1520, Machiavelli, as was his wont, took occasion to study the politics and history of his place of temporary sojourn, and then, with a regardlessness for recorded facts which is positively whimsical, chose to fasten upon the Lucchesan *condottiere*, Castracani, military theories which he soon afterwards developed more or less impersonally, and at considerable length, in his *Art of War*. Our author personified his theory of the infantry tactics of the future in this pseudo-biographical sketch much as his views upon the government of the future are personified in *The Prince*. These last views he stated elaborately and also impersonally in the *Discourses on Livy*, just as he argued out the question of infantry tactics in the seven books of his *Art of War*. In both cases the personification preceded the ampler theoretical statement. Machiavelli was occupied with his *Art of War* while writing Castruccio's life, and he began *The Prince* and the *Discourses on Livy* together; but the shorter work in each case was



promptly finished, whereas both of the longer works dragged. Indeed, the *Discourses on Livy* were never finished. All this goes far to prove that Machiavelli's characteristic ideas and most far-reaching and original theories naturally took shape in his mind as persons.

The process by which our author translated these personal demonstrations into impersonal ones was evidently difficult and presumably uncongenial to him, whereas the personified projection of his thought was original and spontaneous. Shaping themselves automatically, as it were, his political intuitions seemed fairly to take him by storm; but their first impersonated portrayal always, for this very reason, lacked the sobering soundness of second thoughts, which found a more painstaking expression later on. A half conscious adumbration of this curious law to which his thinking was subject may have visited Machiavelli's mind where, in the fifteenth chapter of *The Prince*, he quietly remarks by way of apology for presuming to contradict previous writers, "The scope of my essays being to write what shall prove of practicable service to whoso can take my meaning, I have deemed it the more feasible course to be taken in tow by the truth working its way through accomplished facts rather than to adventure after fictitious cases."<sup>1</sup> Machiavelli's primary meaning here is obviously that he will have nothing to say about ideal states. — republics like that of Plato, or monarchies like that of Dante; but will deal rather

<sup>1</sup> "Ma, sendo l'intento mio scrivere cosa utile a chi l'intende, mi è parso più conveniente andare dietro alla verità effettuale della cosa, che all'immaginazione di essa. . . ."

with things actually seen, and therefore manifestly practicable. If then we proceed a step farther and ask how facts, things actually seen, appealed to Machiavelli — what aspect of them, that is to say, was first and most fully apprehended by him — I think we already have reason for saying that those facts chiefly laid hold upon him which he could read as bound up with the doings and sayings, the projects and performances, of some person. Since this was his bent, we must once more lament the narrowness and insufficiency of our author's personal contact with strong men. I hope in discussing his idea of morals to point out a connection between Machiavelli's proneness to dramatize first what afterwards became his theories, which he saw acted out in the flesh while he was himself in the act of framing them, and the peculiar elusiveness of his moral standards.

It is doubtless rather idle to talk in the same breath of two works like the *Life of Castruccio Castracani*, which is in most respects a failure — "slight" is, I believe, Lord Macaulay's well-chosen epithet for it — and *The Prince*, one of the most powerful books ever written; but we can in some measure account for the failure of the one and the success of the other by emphasizing one and the same thing, — Machiavelli's dependence for clear thinking upon actual vision, personal and direct. Of the historical personage Castruccio Castracani he could not have such vision. The Lucchesan condottiere was but a name to Machiavelli, since his marauding career was hidden in the "backward and abyssm of time." Indeed, our author never came into contact with any of the really great and

typical leaders of mercenaries who might have figured, and more worthily, in Castruccio's place. Here, then, we find strikingly exemplified Machiavelli's peculiarly straitened dependence upon ocular demonstration, which is illuminated by and also in turn illuminates Pater's pointed characterization of the Renaissance. "The science of that age," says he, "was all divination, clairvoyance, unsubjected to our exact modern formulas, seeking in an instant of vision to concentrate a thousand experiences."<sup>1</sup>

Where, then, are we to find in Machiavelli's experience those instants of vision, moments when he was filled with a fullness of sight whereof his greatest work is the clairvoyant outcome? "I would not," says our author at the beginning of the sixth chapter of *The Prince*, "have any one call me odd for bringing in . . . my constant appeals to the most telling worthies of history. We know men will not swerve from the beaten track, we know all their acts wedded to the constraint of example. Hence, though we can never quite keep to the wake of others or perfectly work out what our models have wrought, none the less does common sense require the wary never to strike out from the paths which are level and easy for us because the footfall of great men of compelling worth has trodden them smooth. So shall you find that, though even your strength run short of their glory, your deeds none the less shall exhale some perfume wafted from them. And you shall stand like the heedful archer who sees the mark he must aim at far distant, who knows to what

<sup>1</sup> *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, "Leonardo da Vinci."

range his bow may carry, so then high above that mark takes his aim, not as deeming strength or stress of his shall compass so high, but still he hopes by so greatly overshooting to reach what he has in view."<sup>1</sup> Here Machiavelli has in mind quite as much the examples from ancient as those from contemporary history, but the persistence and insistence with which he presses the figure of actual vision may go far to confirm us in a conviction that what chiefly appealed to him, what really determined his thought, was the vision of powerful deeds done in his own day and before his own eyes.

Now whose were the deeds and words intensely, effectively, — and so far greatly, — said and done that nerved Machiavelli's hand to draw his lurid picture of the man of destiny, the remorseless, the atrocious Prince? Lorenzo de' Medici clearly must have had some effect, for he came into power at Florence in 1469, the year of Machiavelli's birth, and ruled there until our author was twenty-three years of age. Though certainly a very different prince from Machiavelli's, Lorenzo

<sup>1</sup> "Non si maravigli alcuno se nel parlare che io farò de' principati al tutto nuovi e di principe e di Stato, io adurrò grandissimi esempj: perchè camminando gli uomini quasi sempre per le vie battute dei altri, e procedendo nelle azioni loro con le imitazioni, nè si potendo le vie d'altro al tutto tenere, nè alla virtù di quelli che tu imiti aggiugnere, debbe un uomo prudente entrare sempre per le vie battute da uomini grandi, e quelli che sono stati eccellentissimi imitare, acciochè se la sua virtù non v'arriva, almeno ne renda qualche odore, e fare come gli arcieri prudenti, ai quali parendo il luogo dove disegnano ferire troppo lontano, e conoscendo fino a quanto arriva la virtù del loro arco, pongono la mira assai più alto che il luogo destinato, non per aggiugnere con la loro forza o freccia a tanta altezza, ma per potere con l'aiuto di sì alta mira pervenire al disegno loro."

the Magnificent must undoubtedly have arrested the attention of the future undersecretary, the closing page of whose *Florentine History* contains the following attempt at his portrayal. "Take into account his two prevailing moods, the grave and the gay, and you shall discover in him not one but two persons, marked by contradictory notes that blend into an impossible union of incongruous opposites."<sup>1</sup> Superficial and unconvincing though this be as a portrait of Lorenzo, or indeed of anybody, yet, if the briefest possible characterization of Machiavelli's Prince were required, no fitter words could be found than Machiavelli's "impossible union of incongruous opposites." The fact, however, remains, and it is not unimportant to recognize it; that such a character portrait as Machiavelli's of Lorenzo the Magnificent is little better than a confession of failure to portray.

Such a failure must serve to warn the readers of *The Prince* that its gifted writer was no reader of human character. Whatever merits his writings have, we may, accordingly, be prepared to find our author weak where the Cardinal de Retz was strong, — in the painting of contemporary portraits. Moreover, when we discover affinities between his man of destiny, the Prince, and such a manifestly crude<sup>2</sup> representation

<sup>1</sup> "Tanto che a considerare in quello e la vita leggiera e la grave, si vedeva in lui essere due persone diverse quasi con impossibile congiunzione congiunte."

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps, indeed, allowance must be made for the embarrassment of Machiavelli, who wrote his *Florentine History* for one of the Medici, and may not have felt quite free to go into particulars about the Magnificent Lorenzo.

of the great man of his boyhood, we might well wonder if Machiavelli did not carry with him through life a preconceived notion that a truly impressive and forceful character must always be "an impossible union of incongruous opposites," that is, must always defy rational comprehension and transgress the appointed limits of human nature. Such a view of the great is frequently in vogue among the common people the world over, and may well have been in Machiavelli's day a currently accepted idol of the Florentine market place.

Thus it becomes plain that the little experience Machiavelli had of the great conspired with the small profit he derived from that little to make it doubly unfortunate that Cæsar Borgia crossed his path, along with the Pope Alexander, Cæsar's father; for both of them were flagrant exceptions to all rules established in the European world for human character: to the European mind they were incongruous and baffling men because of their truly African savagery and the dazzling vulgarity of their splendor. They were Spaniards in whom a touch of the blackamoor from Morocco and a strain of the Bedouin from the Sahara had been cunningly compounded with Iberian callousness, and — in the case of Cæsar and his sister Lucretia — there was also a dash of vulgar Italian sensuality. Be this said with all due deference to the late Bishop of London, who stands forth against Ranke as the Borgian apologist. "It is not improbable," says the right reverend historian of the popes, "that Alexander VI used poison in the same way as his contemporaries, but I do not

Let  
Borgia  
was  
only for  
reason  
lent i

think that many of their attempts succeeded."<sup>1</sup> The Borgias, so named from an Aragonian village near Valencia, appeared first in Italy with King Alfonso of Aragon in the second quarter of the fifteenth century. Alonzo de Borja became cardinal in 1442, and then in 1455 was made pope under the name of Calixtus III. He was distinguished for devotion to all of his family. His sister married a cousin, and their son Rodrigo, the most Borgia of the Borgias, was made Pope Alexander VI in 1492, when Cæsar, his third son, was sixteen years old.

Cæsar Borgia made a false start in life. At seven a canon, a bishop at fourteen, an archbishop at fifteen, he only discovered that he had no vocation for the Church six years after he had received a cardinal's hat, at the age of seventeen. Cæsar was prompt and energetic when he made this discovery, and induced his father, the pope, first to unfrock him, and then to give him the position of papal generalissimo. He did however wait, before making this second request, until the position he coveted was vacant, — until his brother, the Duke of Gandia, was stabbed and flung into the Tiber. M. Yriarte, Cæsar's recent (1889) biographer, contrives to remain in doubt as to Cæsar's complicity in the assassination of his brother; but against his charitable judgment there is, upon Yriarte's own showing, not

<sup>1</sup> The citation is from Appendix 2 (p. 265) of Vol. IV of Bishop Creighton's well-known *History of the Papacy during the Period of the Reformation*. Bishop Creighton's memory will always be kept green in the United States by his generous gift to Massachusetts of the manuscript of Governor Bradford's diary.

only the pertinent and immemorably damning argument *Cui bono?* but also a formidable mass of circumstantial evidence. Not the least convincing circumstance in all this array is what we know of the behavior of Alexander VI, Cæsar's father, when first he heard of the murder.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after this fratricidal achievement Cæsar became known to Machiavelli in the Romagnas. There and then, as papal generalissimo, Cæsar Borgia unquestionably exhibited just that mixture of self-seeking good faith and well-timed treachery, of gaiety and moroseness, just that remorseless combination of whimsical ferocity and even-handed equity, that startling union of close-fisted rapacity and lavish expenditure on public works, required to lend precision and actuality to the groping thoughts of Machiavelli. In fact, when he met Cæsar Borgia, our author was for the first time confronted with what most resembled his own conception of a great man, one so energetic and regardless of all beside his own purpose that his oppressions and atrocities took on a hue of politic consistency. He seemed like one predestined to sear and cure the inveterate gangrene of corruption which Machiavelli saw infecting the peoples of Italy and incapacitating them for any hopes of liberation and independent national existence. Here, if anywhere, he thought he had come upon a force capable of welding into one state the disjointed fractions of Italy. Distracted and dismembered everywhere, the body politic of Italy

<sup>1</sup> Alexander made the most anxious inquiries to discover the assassin for nine days, and then suddenly ceased all his efforts. See *Cæsar Borgia*, par Charles Yriarte, Vol. 1, pp. 117-132.



## 22 MACHIAVELLI AND THE MODERN STATE

was nowhere completely pulverized except in the Romagnas. There society had reverted to that prehistoric reign of violence under which, according to Hobbes, "persons of sovereign authority, because of their independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators, having their weapons pointing and their eyes fixed on one another."<sup>1</sup> And it was in the Romagnas that Machiavelli saw Cæsar Borgia at work, and was fairly hypnotized by the spectacle. "I am not the man," said Cæsar to Machiavelli the first time they ever met, "to rob Florence of anything that is hers. I rob no man, for I am not here to act a tyrant's part. I come to make an end of tyrants,"<sup>2</sup> and in some strange way Machiavelli contrived to take him at his own valuation.

The Romagnas or Romagna — the ancient exarchate of Ravenna — form a wedge whose base lies along the middle tract of the eastern coast of Italy, stretching from Ravenna to Sinigaglia, with a hinterland extending westward to the ridge of the Apennines. Included in the Romagnas are such famous centers as Bologna, Imola, Forlì, Cesena, Rimini, Urbino, Sinigaglia, and Pesaro. The whole forms part of what in the early sixties used to figure on our school maps of Italy as the Papal States, or the States of the Church. In the closing year (1500) of the fifteenth century, the Romagnas were in a condition as exceptional as the man whom

<sup>1</sup> *Leviathan*, Part I, chap. xiii.

<sup>2</sup> See the first dispatch from Urbino, P.M. IV, p. 11; the whole is in indirect quotation: "e che non pensava di torvi niente del vostro, come non voleva di quello di persona, non essendo lui per tiraneggiare, ma per spegnere e' tiranni."

Pope Alexander sent to pacify them, and the means by which he accomplished that feat. Probably the people of no other corner in the world were so hopelessly harried by all forms of misgovernment that they could have hailed as their deliverer a Cæsar Borgia.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, there can be no question as to the genuine relief which his coming brought. Everywhere in Italy there was misgovernment, but still Machiavelli's telling indictment of the petty Italian princes, given at the end of his *Art of War*, applies best of all to the Romagnas: "Before foreign invasion waked them up, our Italian princes deemed it quite enough for a prince if he could elaborate a clever rejoinder and round off a neatly phrased letter, show himself subtle and swift in his talk and his small talk; he needed too a knack for conspiracy, and a genius for wearing jewelry; his bed and his board had to be out of the common in gorgeousness; also the most uncommon appurtenances for loose self-indulgence were indispensable. With his subjects he had to play the miser and treat them with dazzling contempt. His vocation was idleness; his military appointments had to go solely by favoritism; and if any one chanced to say a word for anything good, he had to snub him, and at all times to pose as Sir Oracle."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Both before and after Cæsar Borgia the Romagnas maintain their bad preëminence as a misgoverned region. Guicciardini, who was papal governor there after Cæsar's day, had on one occasion to burn a bandit, and tells the most gruesome tales of atrocities committed by Romagnol nobles. Even to-day something of the old anarchical instinct still clings to the Romagnol.

<sup>2</sup> "Credevano i nostri principi italiani, prima che egli assaggiassero i colpi delle oltramontane guerre, che a un principe bastasse sapere negli

Besides this general indictment of the tyrants of the Romagnas, Machiavelli gives in more than one well-known passage a most specific account of the peculiar situation of the Romagnol people. "Before Pope Alexander VI," he says, meaning Cæsar, Alexander's generalissimo, "wiped out the lords of the Romagnas, that district was a perfect example of all manner of evil living. The slightest freak of chance would culminate there in rapine and bloodshed, and this through the wickedness of the Romagnol princes, for all their talk of badness bred in the bone of their Romagnol subjects."<sup>1</sup> Our author then specifies a practice of the Romagnol princes, who enacted impracticably stringent laws in order at first to encourage their violation by their own example, and then to levy blackmail for letting transgressors go scot-free. Penalties were never enforced in connection with such laws until the number of habitual violators grew large. "The worst result was," writes Machiavelli, "that the people were both impoverished and depraved, since those

scrittoi pensare una risposta, scrivere una bella lettera, mostrare nei detti e nelle parole arguzia e prontezza, sapere tessere una fraude, ornarsi di gemme e d'oro, dormire e mangiare con maggiore splendore che gli altri, tenere assai lascivie intorno, governarsi col sudditi avaramente e superbamente, marcirsi nell'ozio, dare i gradi della milizia per grazia, disprezzare se alcuno avesse loro dimostro alcuna lodevole via, volere che le parole loro fossero responsi di oracoli."

<sup>1</sup> *Discourses*, III, xxix: "La Romagna innanzi che in quella fussero spenti da Papa Alessandro VI quelli signori che la comandavano, era uno esempio d'ogni sceleratissima vita, perchè quivi si vedeva per ogni leggiera cagione seguire uccisioni e rapine grandissime. Il che nasceva della tristezza di quei principi, non della natura trista degli uomini, come loro dicevano."

reduced to penury by this means would proceed to compass the ruin of any neighbors too weak to withstand them."<sup>1</sup>

Machiavelli returns again, this time in *The Prince* (chap. vii), to the "still-verx" Romagnas: "They were governed," he says, "by feeble princes whose vehemence in robbing far outran their valor in controlling their subjects. In view of all this," says our author, warming to his theme, "Cæsar Borgia made up his mind that good government was absolutely indispensable, if the country was to resume a peaceful and law-abiding condition. He accordingly appointed for his lieutenant Ramiro d' Orco, a cruel and swift-handed man, to whom he gave plenary powers. This lieutenant was not long in making himself a name of dread by enforcing peace and harmony throughout the whole region." In both these passages Machiavelli's power of expression is at his very best, and therefore we must, I think, admit that his studies from the life in the Romagnas were not confined to Prince Cæsar, but took in the political and social evils of the microscopic Romagnol tyrannies with a sympathetic discrimination, a real feeling for the hard condition of the common people, which is positively startling. Perhaps we may be justified after all in insisting that Machiavelli's *Prince* is an epoch-marking work, not because he knew what a prince should do or be, but because he could gauge the needs of the people of his own time.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*: "Donde nascevano molti inconvenienti, e sopra tutto questo, che i popoli s' impoverivano e non si correggevano; e quelli che erano impoveriti s' ingegnavano contro ai meno potenti di loro prevalersi."

Though a novice in warfare, Cæsar Borgia fell like a whirlwind upon this anarchy of the Romagnas. In the winter's campaign of 1499-1500 he expelled the Riario from Imola and Forlì, where he was hailed as a liberator by the suffering people. In his second campaign of 1500-1501 he made clearance of the Sforza at Pesaro, of the Malatesta at Rimini, and of the Manfredi at Faenza. These Manfredi, be it said, were not tarred with the same brush as the other princeling bandits of the Romagnas. Cæsar's third campaign of 1502-1503 swept the Varani out of Camerino, chosen for the capital of his new duchy, and drove the della Rovere from Sinigaglia. Siena and Piombino, though not strictly within the Romagnas, were nevertheless, along with the town and duchy of Urbino, as well as its good Duke Guidobaldo, included in the catholic range of Borgia's executions. Thus were his operations brought to the very verge of the Florentine domain, and finally Vitellozzo Vitelli, the not yet dispossessed tyrant of Città di Castello, joined with the Orsini, — all being for the moment in Cæsar's pay, — crossed the frontier, and laid hands on Arezzo and other Florentine possessions.

This unprovoked invasion, a critical moment alike for Cæsar and Florence, took place in 1502. Borgia had been Duke of Romagna for four years, and for four years Machiavelli had been undersecretary at Florence. The Florentines dispatched a somewhat dull-witted grandee, the Cardinal Bishop Francesco Soderini, to treat with Cæsar at Urbino, but Machiavelli attended him for three days as secretary. The *official dispatches* sent back to Florence are signed by

Soderini, but their author is Machiavelli, and they contain his first impressions of the great man. "This duke," he writes, "is so enterprising as to deem the most enormous undertakings a small matter, and he will rob himself of sleep to enhance his reputation or extend his domain. Hardships and perils he defies. Before leaving you time to learn he has quitted one place, he is established in another. He wins his soldiers' hearts; gets hold of the stanchest men, and is in luck all the time, — enough and more than enough to give him the victory, and to make us fear him."<sup>1</sup> Again, alluding to Cæsar's savage violation of friendship and hospitality in

<sup>1</sup> See P.M., IV, Legazione X, 14 f. Letter from Urbino of June 26, 1502: "Questo Signore è molto splendido et magnifico, et nelle armi è tanto animoso, che non è si gran cosa che non li paia piccola, et per gloria et per acquistare stato mai si riposa nè conosce fatica o pericolo: giugne prima in un luogo che se ne possa intendere la partita donde si lieva; fassi ben volere a' suoi soldati; a cappati e migliori uomini d'Italia: le quali cose lo fanno vittorioso e formidabile, aggiunto con una perpetua fortuna." See also Villari's account of the matter, *Life and Times, etc.*, I, 291 ff. The helplessness and panic-stricken irritability of Soderini, who had to face Cæsar alone from June 26, when Machiavelli posted to Florence with alarming accounts of Borgia's threats against the republic, to the 15th of July, when the Ten at last plucked up enough courage to say they would conclude their negotiations with the pope at Rome, are positively ludicrous. See his further dispatches in P.M., 17-63. Cæsar was so angry at the recall of Soderini that the latter fairly takes to his heels, saying in his last letter (P.M., 63): "Poco se ne satisfecè et parve restasse molto sospeso, come vi farò intendere a bocca; che per fuggir questi confini sospetti me ne son venuto con ogni celerità questa sera a Bagno, et venerdì spero esser costì, se le bestie non mi danno impaccio come hanno fatto oggi." The cardinal bishop closes ingloriously with denunciations of certain "sciagurati cavalieri" who had loitered with messages, and whom he recommends for a sound drubbing as follows: "che se alle volte fussino gastigati, e' vostri ministri vi potrebbon meglio servire."

suddenly driving out the Duke of Urbino, Machiavelli says, trembling as he writes, "The way of these people is to sneak into other men's houses before they are aware of it, as was the case of the last lord of this place, whose death was announced before men heard he was ill."<sup>1</sup>

There is a note of physical terror in this lurid way of announcing that Duke Guidobaldo — an excellent man, and like Manfredi not to be confounded with Cæsar's other victims — was in full flight before it was known that Borgia had broken with him. This spectacle of Cæsar Borgia at Urbino roused Machiavelli as if he had received an electric shock, quickening all his faculties and clearing his powers of vision. Doubtless he now understood better than five years before, when he jeered at them, those words of Savonarola's first sermon in St. Mark's, which at the time made such an impression upon him that he recorded them in a friendly letter (dated March 8, 1497) as follows: "The friar said that our discords might easily raise up a tyrant to wreck our homes and ravage our homesteads, but that such a thing ran not counter to his prognostication of happiness in store for Florence, whose destiny

<sup>1</sup> P.M., IV, 12: "... il modo di procedere di costoro [Cesare Borgia] è di essere altrui prima in casa che se ne sia alcuno avveduto; come è intervenuto ad questo Signore [Guidobaldo da Montefeltro duca di Urbino] passato, *del quale si è prima sentito la morte, che la malattia.*" In the first letter written from Ponticelli, on June 22, before they reached Urbino, Machiavelli and Soderini write of this same episode, which they style "la celere e felice vittoria di quel Signore dello Stato di Urbino," and in closing they remark, "El modo di questa vittoria è tutto fondato su la prudenzia di questo Signore"; and then, after details of his swiftness, they add, "... notino vostre Signorie questo stratta-gemma e tanta celerità conjunta a una eccellentissima felicità."

was to rule Italy, since the tyrant would in a little while be driven out. With these words," writes Machiavelli, "his sermon ended."<sup>1</sup>

Machiavelli, before meeting Cæsar Borgia, had chiefly distinguished himself at his chancery as the one whose industry had insured that no arrears of correspondence should accumulate.<sup>2</sup> He had failed in his only important and delicate mission (in 1499) at Forlì, during which he was trifled with and outwitted by Catharine Sforza.<sup>3</sup> These facts have their importance, as they serve to point the difference between the outward efficiency of Machiavelli before and after his awakening in the Romagna; but perhaps this difference is best of all shown by another and parallel difference in our author's own mind. Just before his mission to Borgia we know what was his mind about pacifying Pistoia, — a problem that occupied his chancery in 1501. How

<sup>1</sup> " . . . che le discordie nostre ci potrebbero far sorgere un tiranno che ci rovinerebbe le case e guasterebbe le terre, e questo non era già contro a quello che egli aveva già detto, che Firenze doveva felicitare, e dominare all' Italia, perchè poco tempo si starebbe che sarebbe cacciato; e in su questo finì la sua predicatione."

<sup>2</sup> See Villari's *Life and Times, etc.*, I, 257, where a letter written to Machiavelli during his mission at Forlì is quoted. It is from his friend and colleague, Biagio Bonaccorsi, who complains that there is great disorder in the chancery in Machiavelli's absence, and announces a mass of work accumulated.

<sup>3</sup> See the last two letters, VI and VII, of the "Legazione alla Contessina Caterina Sforza," where the countess is first of one mind and then, having slept on her decision, of quite the contrary mind; upon which Machiavelli writes on July 23, 1499: "Udendo io questa mutazione, non possetti fare che io non me ne mostrassi malcontento, e con parole e con gesti. . . ." See also Villari, *Life and Times, etc.*, I, 252-257.



utterly his idea of the right policy to be pursued in such a case was revolutionized by what he saw of Cæsar's work in the Romagna, appears in an unfinished work written immediately after he had taken leave of Borgia and returned to Florence. Here he sets forth the right way to deal with the rebels at Arezzo and in the Val di Chiana generally. What he deems advisable for the people of Arezzo cannot be a sound policy unless his advice about Pistoia was unsound. The two policies are diametrically opposed. In fact Machiavelli's later programme is best understood as a criticism of the earlier one. At Pistoia the beginning of anarchy and promiscuous assassination was a rising in 1501 of the notorious Cancellieri against the nefarious Panciatichi, who were expelled. Three times in the course of that year Machiavelli was sent to Pistoia to report and make recommendations. All that he recommended is not before us in his own words, for many documents have been lost, and a large part of his work in the whole business was transacted  *viva voce*. Still he constantly signed dispatches that are preserved, and in which his ideas were adopted by the Signory at Florence. These were (a) to readmit the Panciatichi, (b) to smooth away the marks of savage and indiscriminate plundering and murder by small concessions and petty remissions, (c) to adopt a scheme of police and patrols which was ludicrously inapplicable to the Pistoian emergency.<sup>1</sup> The best possible criticism

<sup>1</sup> See all the documents in P.M., III, 246-357. Confusion has arisen because while Machiavelli was acting in Florence as the secretary who signed instructions sent to the Florentine commissioners at Pistoia,

of this feeble programme of pacification was no doubt suggested by Cæsar Borgia's contemporary executions in the Romagna. This Machiavelli apparently realized in June, 1502, while at Urbino, as was shown two months afterward in his short discourse *On the Right Way to deal with the Peoples who rebelled in the Val di Chiana*. This striking fragment — it is but a fragment — is a speech never meant to be delivered, addressed to a convocation of Florentine magistrates that never assembled. It contains, however, not oratory but a clearly argued series of general reflections on the way to pacify Arezzo. Wedded to classical tradition without really grasping the requirements of classical form, Machiavelli felt obliged to adopt the outward semblance of oratory in this scientific dissertation, just as he felt bound to justify the detailed measures of pacification which he recommends by intricate references to Roman history. We know, however, that at this time<sup>1</sup> Roman

another Niccolò Machiavelli (his cousin) was on several occasions one of the latter, who jointly signed various regulations issued from time to time. The only clear summary is contained in the genuine Machiavelli's "Relazione di Pistoia," P.M., III, 352-357, which should be read in connection with 246 ff.

<sup>1</sup> Fifteen years afterwards, when he wrote the twenty-seventh chapter in the third book of his *Discourses on Livy*, Machiavelli was able to give chapter and verse from Roman history for the policy first revealed to him in the Romagna as follows: "We may gather from the example of the Roman consuls who brought to pass a reconciliation among the men of Ardea, how to set about pacifying a city divided against itself. The one and only possible cure is to kill the leaders, for you have only two other courses open to you if you do not kill them as the Romans did: they must either be expelled, or forced to make peace and live without molesting one another. This third course is the most hopeless." He then cites the case of Pistoia, saying: "Fifteen years ago it was divided,



now proceeds with arguments from Cæsar's negotiations with Florence to show that he had annexation in view, and then says : " I remember hearing Cardinal Soderini when he said that among other signs of greatness in the pope and the duke, was their skill in taking time by the forelock, — in seizing and improving opportunities. This remark is fully justified by their manifest success thus far in taking advantage of circumstances. Ask me whether now is their opportunity for pressure upon you, and I answer 'No, not now,' but consider how sorely the duke is pressed for time. His father's life cannot last long, therefore the first opportunity he will seize, nor can he avoid staking his enterprise for the more part on the hazards of fortune."<sup>1</sup> With these words closes the first memorable and original production of Machiavelli's pen. They are, I think, quite explicit enough to bear out the assertion that his first clear exposition of the political programme of *The Prince*,

suo, e che egli aspiri allo imperio di Toscana, come più propinquo ed atto a farne un regno con gli altri stati che tiene. . . ." This last clause has, without real misrepresentation of the drift of Machiavelli's argument, been treated as an independent one, and taken out of its context. See the last paragraph of the fragment entitled *Del modo di trattare i popoli della Valdichiana rebellati*.

<sup>1</sup> Same fragment : " E' mi ricorda avere udito dire al cardinale de' Soderini che fra le altre laude che si potevano dare di grande uomo al papa e al duca, era questa: Che siano conoscitori della occasione, e che la sappiano usare benissimo: la quale opinione è approvata della esperienza delle cose condotte da loro con la opportunità. E se si avessi a disputare se gli è ora tempo opportuno e sicuro a strignervi, io direi di no; ma considerato che il duca non può aspettare il partito vinto, per restargli poco di tempo, rispetto alla brevità della vita del pontefice, è necessario che si usa la prima occasione che se gli offerisce, e che commetta della causa sua buona parte alla fortuna."

and with it his first thought of energetic and effective intervention in the practical affairs of Florence, sprang from his first glimpse of Cæsar Borgia at Urbino.

At the end of that same year (1502) Machiavelli was with the great man once more. From the 7th of October until the 20th of January following, our Florentine undersecretary was in continual attendance upon Cæsar. They were at Imola from October 7 to December 13; from December 14 until the day after Christmas they were at Cesena; and on the last day of the year they reached Sinigaglia, and spent New Year's Day at Corinaldo, subsequently making short stays at Sassoferrato, Gualdo, and Torsiano. This catalogue has its importance, since it shows what a complete opportunity was Machiavelli's to acquaint himself at first hand and in many places with the feelings of the Romagnol people about the new duke. The undersecretary's fifty-two dispatches during this itinerant embassy record not only the growth in his own mind of the outlines of that science of the modern state which he more than any one founded, but also give us, sketched in by his own hand as they came to him, his first impressions about several historical episodes that are to reappear in *The Prince*. Upon these episodes as his cardinal points Machiavelli depended for those counsels of political perfection on which the new statecraft of the new Prince was to hinge.

The object of Florence in deputing Machiavelli to act as a sort of *chargé d'affaires* near the duke's person was to keep an eye on him. France, always the ally of Florence, intervened to discourage the wider

Italian schemes of Borgia, and made him restore what his captains had taken from Florence. But still, on one pretext or another, the Florentine undersecretary was kept in Cæsar's immediate neighborhood, and formed a regular feature of his miniature ducal court. This was necessary because the Florentine government required to be constantly informed as to the vicissitudes of a quarrel in progress between the duke and certain of his robber captains, — the very men whose recent raid on his behalf into Florentine territory Borgia had, through fear of France, been forced to disavow. The whole intrigue by which he first concluded an elaborate peace, then arranged to meet his captains, and finally slaughtered them by foul play, fascinated and terrified Machiavelli as he watched and reported progress from day to day, almost from hour to hour. His instructions were to temporize with Borgia, who now gave out that he wished for an alliance with Florence, to elude definite obligations, and to do his endeavor in fathoming the young duke's plan. "The first two things," he reports, "I flatter myself I have done: as for fathoming his intentions I certainly have used my best endeavors."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Machiavelli's seventh letter, dated Imola, October 15, 1502: "Quanto alla Poscritta, che VV. SS. mi scrivono, di temporeggiare, non ne obbligo, e cercare d'intendere l'animo suo, mi pare fino a qui avere fatto le due prime cose, e della terza essermi ingegnato. . . ." See also Letter XLII, dated Cesena, December 26, "hora 21 diei," where he writes: ". . . questo signore e segretissimo, nè credo quello si abbi a fare lo sappi altro che lui: e questi suoi primi segretarij mi hanno più volte attestato che non comunica mai cosa alcuna, se non quando e' la commette. . . ."

The duke, in his numerous interviews with Machiavelli, alternated between a tone of blunt condescension and a hearty manner no less condescending but even more overbearing; in fact, sometimes he played the boisterous bully. Indeed, he does not disdain to spring an occasional trap, as when he suddenly said to the Florentine secretary: "When Paul Orsini came the other day, he said your Florence people sent two men to him at Urbino proposing to take him or his son into their pay, if he would undertake to do something energetic at Pisa in their interest. 'I refused,' Orsini said, 'because there was some question of acting against Duke Cæsar.'" "By way of answer," says Machiavelli, "I asked him if Orsini named the two Florentine envoys, or showed him letters that bore out the statement; also whether the said Paul ever had chanced to tell him such a thing as a lie. He admitted that Orsini had shown no letters and named no names. As to lies, he had never got much of anything else out of him. And so," observes Machiavelli, "this matter passed off as a joke, though when he began upon it he made a great show of believing Orsini and of being very much upset."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letter XXXIII (P.M., IV, 215), dated Imola, December 6, 1502: ". . . il signore Paolo Orsini ultimamente che egli è stato qui, mi ha detto che i tuoi signori li hanno mandato a Urbino due uomini a fargli intendere che se voleva condursi o lui o suo figliuolo, che gli darebbero condizione, quando operasse qualche cosa a beneficio vostro circa le cose di Pisa, e che era mancato da lui, perchè dalle SS. VV. non era rimasto di aderirgli per fare ancora contro a Sua Eccellenza. Io gli domandai, se il signore Paolo gli aveva detto il nome di questi due, o se ne gli aveva mostrate lettere di credenza, ovvero se detto signore Paolo per l'addietro gli aveva detto mai bugia veruna. Rispose che lettere non gli aveva mostrate, e manco detto chi erano; ma che delle

It is plain enough that Machiavelli did not precisely enjoy his sojourn with Borgia, although he repeatedly betrays a prepossession in the young duke's favor<sup>1</sup> that stands out in strong contrast to the note of mistrust and terrified aversion in the dispatches of his first embassy. Then it was terror and mistrust, now it is terror and admiration, amounting in some instances almost to a blind trust. Machiavelli studies his great man and humors his whims and tastes *ad nauseam*.

And yet our Florentine envoy, a man of the general, — the *universale* as he often calls the Commons of Florence, — was increasingly uneasy in the presence of this Hispano-Moresque grandee. He begs and prays for recall, pleading illness now, and again that his private affairs require him. Above all, he urges sincerely and repeatedly that he is too humble a person and lacks the credit and dignity needed in such negotiations.<sup>2</sup>

Other points of interest in Machiavelli's relations with Duke Cæsar must occupy another chapter. For the present we have been asking how and why Cæsar Borgia came to figure in Machiavelli's mind as the chief

bugie gli ne aveva ben dette assai; e così si risolvè questa cosa ridendo, nonostante che nel principio lui me ne parlasse turbato, mostrando di crederla, e che gli dolesse."

<sup>1</sup> Letters XIII (P.M., IV, 117), October 23, and XIX (P.M., IV, 155), November 4, and XXXIV (P.M., IV, 218), December 6, all from Imola. See also Letter XLII (P.M., IV, 250), from Cesena, where he speaks admiringly of the summary execution of Rimino by Cæsar Borgia: "il quale mostra di saper fare e disfare gli uomini a sua posta, secondo i meriti loro."

<sup>2</sup> Letters XIII f., XXVII, XXXIII, XXXVI f. (P.M., 121, 131, 217, 226, 232) all wind up with some plea for his recall, like so many of poor Soderini's from Urbino.



exemplar of his looked-for savior of society, as the real type of the Prince who was to make an end of anarchy in Italy and to found there a firmly knit and united state. The considerations submitted above yield several answers more or less satisfactory. First, Cæsar Borgia was the only man of exceptional power with whom Machiavelli was brought into contact; furthermore, he was a person whose character offered manifest contradictions and startling incongruities. This would predispose our author to make much of him, since he had been impressed as a youth under Lorenzo the Magnificent with the idea that your really great man and successful was "an impossible union of incongruous opposites."

This leads on to the second of our answers, which is as simple as the first one. In the eyes of a man like Machiavelli, who was unskilled to an exceptional degree as a reader of human character, Cæsar Borgia could stand for far more than he fairly represented. He had not the gifts of a Cardinal de Retz or of a Montaigne, but possessed something of the far rarer intuitions<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Discourses*, I, v f., xvi f., xxxix, and liii; see also Machiavelli's second letter in the *Legazione al Duca Valentino*, dated Imola, October 9, 1502 (P.M., IV, 76), where he notes discontent among the people of Romagna because Cæsar Borgia always favored his own soldiers in matters where the natives were involved; in Letter XLII (P.M., IV, 259) we detect his understanding of the people in the briefly interjected clause "e tutto questo popolo lo ha possuto vedere" which comes directly after his description of Messer Ramiro d' Orco's beheaded corpse lying in the open market place. The effect of this execution upon the people at large is analyzed more in detail in the seventh chapter of *The Prince*, which, rightly understood, will always remain one of the most remarkable of all recorded interpretations of the state to which misrule can reduce a defenseless population.

of a Lincoln or a Gladstone; by the grace of a sort of instinct he judged men in the mass—the people—unerringly, but he lacked that tolerant outlook upon the world high and low which enlightened the far inferior capacities of Francesco Guicciardini and Sir Robert Dallington, enabling them to gauge the characters and judge aright the conduct of princes.<sup>1</sup> He therefore felt no scruple in isolating one very short segment of Cæsar Borgia's career which he idealized as exemplary because, during the four or five years in question, Borgia rescued the Romagnas from anarchy. Also it was during those years, the last of them more particularly, that Machiavelli's own bodily eyes were absolutely riveted upon Duke Cæsar. He knew nothing of him before, and scarcely heeded him after that time.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, I, lviii: Note especially the argument "ad un principe cattivo non è alcuno che possa parlare, nè vi è altro rimedio che il ferro. Da che si può fare coniettura della importanza della malattia dell' uno e del altro: che se a curare la malattia del popolo bastano le parole, ed a quella del principe bisogna il ferro, non sarà mai alcuno che non giudichi che dove bisogna maggior cura siano maggiori errori. . . . Le crudeltà della moltitudine sono contro a chi ei temono che occupi il ben comune; quelle d'un principe sono contro a chi ei temono che occupi il ben proprio." On Dallington see Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> See particularly the seventh chapter of *The Prince*, noting especially our author's account of his interview with Borgia at the time when Julius II was elected pope. Machiavelli attributes Cæsar's failure to ill health: "Ma se nella morte di Alessandro fusse stato sano, ogni cosa gli era facile. Ed egli mi disse ne' di che fu creato Giulio II, che avea pensato a tutto quello che potesse nascere morendo il padre, e a tutto avea trovato rimedio, eccetto che non pensò mai in su la sua morte di stare ancora lui per morire." After this lame excuse he adds: "Raccolte adunque tutte queste azioni del duca, non saprei riprenderlo; anzi mi pare, come ho detto, di proporlo ad imitare a tutti coloro che per fortuna e con le armi d'altri sono saliti all' imperio." In thus

This consideration brings us to our last and by no means least important account of the questions in hand. As was the case with most great men of his time and country, — most especially with those who, like himself, were of more or less modest extraction, — Machiavelli lived within the charmed circle of his own artistic temperament, and was oddly impervious to ideas not accredited by ocular demonstration, that is, without some chance occasion or experience through which they were personified or impersonated. It by no means follows that the man who requires his thought to take personal shape before he can think clearly will also be a practiced judge of persons. Otherwise painters, poets, and sculptors would more often be distinguished as men of the world, and less often be tormented by misconceptions and misunderstandings in their reading of character. Though Cæsar Borgia impersonated his most fruitful and strikingly accurate political forecast, Machiavelli nevertheless was at fault in reading his character, and hence the Prince, though drawn from life, was an impossible human being.

To reach the ground of this impossibility we must go a step farther and remember that our author was at one and the same time a serious political thinker and also attached to the Florentine people by habits and associations of every kind. So it came to pass that in

proposing him for an exemplar, Machiavelli so recast the historical Cæsar Borgia as to make of him in some sort a *deus ex machina* providentially intervening to set in order the tumultuous distractions of Italian political and social life. Indeed, his associations with the Papal See made Cæsar Borgia, when thus refashioned, an ideal figure not wholly unlike certain Greco-Roman divinities of latter-day paganism.

his political mind the needs of the people were uppermost. To him, accordingly, it mattered little that his Prince should be an impossible person, so long as he could look upon him as impersonating political changes which he knew were absolutely indispensable to the happiness and political soundness of the *popolo*. The tragic needs of the debauched and downtrodden commonalty of Italy thus gave the law of life and duty to Machiavelli's Prince. In the Romagnas and under Machiavelli's eyes these needs had been met by Cæsar Borgia's atrocities. So long as Borgia was performing this office, and no longer, did he interest Machiavelli. With this not immaterial reservation it is true to say that Cæsar Borgia was the model and exemplar of the Prince. There the matter may now be left, not, however, without some hope that further side lights upon this perennially perplexing enigma of *The Prince* may be forthcoming in the course of an examination of our author's use of history in framing his new science of the modern state, and that some attempt to disentangle from his life and writings an approximate notion of his idea of morals may also be found illuminating.

## CHAPTER II

### MACHIAVELLI'S USE OF HISTORY

Machiavelli held Dante's Ghibelline view of early Roman history — Guicciardini against Roman history — The *Discourses* and the *De Monarchia* — Roman perfection and modern corruption — Machiavelli's personal observations and experiences of the Swiss (1512-1516) — Correspondence with Vettori — The Swiss as Romans of the Renaissance — Federal leagues and imperial expansion — Paradigms of political perfection taken from early Rome — Swiss constitutional history unknown — Machiavelli's second thoughts about freedom in Tuscany — Roman constitution viewed with Florentine preconceptions — Machiavelli spoke for the people — Guicciardini opposed for the grandees — Confusions between antiquity and modern times — Machiavelli's impatient view of modern history — His science of state exclusively modern — The Prince in his *Florentine History* — Political maxims and principles — His historical myopia a result of his method — Contemporary medicine misled him into unsound generalizations — Machiavelli and the modern "European concert."

In Machiavelli's use and understanding of history we need not be surprised to find peculiarities answering to those already discovered in his understanding and use of the conspicuous episodes in Caesar Borgia's life with which he came personally into contact. Our author's prevailing artistic temperament made it difficult for him to achieve strikingly original views upon matters of ancient history, except in so far as he could find guidance to their right understanding by pondering over the present needs of his contemporaries. By pondering deeply over the needs of Florence and critically scanning the politics and policies of his own day so far as they affected Italy, he early convinced himself

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that everything to which Italians and Italy might otherwise aspire was defeated and made hopeless by pretensions and machinations of the Holy See. Furthermore, he discerned in the free use of money to buy peace and assure the possession of territory a note of corruption inherent in the people of Florence and of other mercantile communities near by. He had tried in various ways, while acting as Florentine secretary, to introduce vigor and political efficiency into Florentine affairs, and had constantly been baffled, as he thought, by a feebleness and degeneracy in the people and the institutions of his time. Hence it came to pass that he was predisposed alike by circumstances and by temperament to adopt the Ghibelline views of Dante, without, however, sharing Dante's illusions about the holy Roman emperors.

In Machiavelli's eyes, Roman history was a profitless blank after the fall of the Republic. But as to all that befell at Rome until that deplorable event, he shows the greatest enthusiasm, and allows himself to follow closely in Dante's footsteps. Dante's enthusiasms are his, only he draws quite original inferences as to the political future of modern peoples. He is everywhere full of the notion that the men of old Rome offer for Italians in his day the rather depressing example of downright perfection. He declares that in his own day, however matters may stand elsewhere, the Greeks (if they have not become Turks outright) and Italians (if they have not transferred their allegiance beyond the Alps) have every good reason for denouncing their own times, and for crying up the days that are past

"In antiquity," he exclaims, "were achieved many things to move our wonder; to-day there is no vestige of anything whatsoever to redeem our times from the uttermost misery, — the last degree of shame and reproach. Religion is without observance, laws are in abeyance, military service is shirked, — sullied all of them alike with unspeakable defilement. Nay, these corrupt managers are the more loathsome by as much as those who practice them exercise authority over us, and exact our humble worship."<sup>1</sup> And again, in the same Introduction to the second book of his *Discourses on Livy*, our author, noting how old men lose youthful vigor in acquiring judgment and caution, admits that this makes them prone to find fault, — railers against the present and praisers of the past, — and thus he admits that they grievously err. "Whether I am to deserve," Machiavelli then goes on to say, "to stand on the list of the erring, I know not. I may seem to praise the days of the ancient Romans too highly, and to decry our own times overmuch." But the case, he says, is too clear against us. Any one can make it out for himself. "I therefore shall yield to the promptings of my spirit, and declare unhesitating my opinion of those days and of these. So shall the spirit of the young who come to

<sup>1</sup> "... ma chi nasce in Italia ed in Grecia, e non sia divenuto o in Italia Oltramontano o in Grecia Turco, ha ragione di biasimare i tempi anoi e laudare gli altri: perche in quelli vi sono assai cose che li fanno maravigliosi; in questi non è cosa alcuna che gli ricomperi d'ogni estrema miseria, infamia e vituperio, dove non è osservanza di religionè, non di leggi, non di milizia, ma sono maculati d'ogni ragione bruttura. E tanto sono questi vizj più detestabili, quanto ei sono più in coloro che seggono pro tribunali. commandono a ciascuno, e vogliono esser adorati."

read me encourage them to turn their backs on these present days, and to emulate, whensoever occasion offers, the examples of days gone by. Indeed, a good man's bounden duty is to look to it, if he himself has fallen on times that are out of joint, and malignant fortune bars him from action, that he shall teach others the good lessons which he himself has failed to translate into deeds. Many have it in them to succeed where he has failed: let achievement wait upon those whom Heaven more loves." <sup>1</sup>

This celebrated passage has been not inaptly compared by Mr. Morley to "the moving close of the *Agricola* of Tacitus." <sup>2</sup> But Tacitus was a stranger to Machiavelli, and for a parallel quite as good, as well as for the actual source of his inspiration, I should look elsewhere, — to an author with whose writings he was most familiar, — and cite the opening words of Dante's *De Monarchia*. "Plainly," says Dante, "the most binding concern of all those men, called by a higher nature to the love of truth, is this: that in just the measure riches have been meted out to them through the toil of bygone men, in that measure they themselves should toil for the enrichment of generations

<sup>1</sup> "Non so adunque se io meriterò d'essere numerato tra quelli che s'ingannano, se in questi miei discorsi io lauderò troppo i tempi degli antichi Romani e biasimerò i nostri. . . . sarò animoso in dire manifestamente quello che intenderò di quelli e di questi tempi, acciochè gli animi de' giovani, che questi miei scritti leggeranno, possano fuggire questi, e prepararsi ad imitar quelli. Perchè gli è ufficio d'uomo buono, quel bene che per la malignità de' tempi e della fortuna tu non hai potuto operare, insegnarlo ad altri, acciochè sendone molti capaci, alcuno di quelli più amati dal cielo possa operarlo."

<sup>2</sup> *Machiavelli*, p. 25.



coming on. He wanders far indeed from the duty of a man, whosoever, having been schooled in matters of public concern, is yet regardless of help to his country. Not he, like a tree planted by the living waters, bringeth forth his fruit in due season ; rather is he like the ravening whirlpool, swallowing all things, and yielding naught in return."<sup>1</sup>

The one material point where this exordium of Dante's to the *De Monarchia* differs from the striking echo of it in Machiavelli's exordium to the second book of his *Discourses on Livy* is that Machiavelli couples his generous account of a good man's duty with passionate denunciations of the degeneracy of Italy. Here, indeed, rather than in any spontaneous and freshly considered appreciation of the institutions and virtues of republican Rome, we have the secret of Machiavelli's laudation of the past. He adopted so much of Dante's enthusiastic retrospect as yielded him a suitable contrast to the evils of his own day, and he bestowed an imperfectly discriminated applause upon everything in the early annals of Latium and ancient Italy which was obviously incompatible with the course of events in contemporary Florence and Rome. Our author's enthusiasms, unlike Dante's, were really barren of any direct

<sup>1</sup> "Omnium hominum in quos amorem veritatis natura superior impressit, hoc maxime interesse videtur, ut quemadmodum de labore antiquorum ditati sunt, ita et ipsi posteris prolaborent quatenus ab eis posteritas habeat quo ditetur. Longe namque ab officio se esse non dubitet, qui publicis documentis imbutus, ad Rempublicam aliquid adferre non curat; non enim est 'lignum, quod secus decursus aquarum fructificat in tempore suo,' sed potius pernicioza vorago semper ingurgitans, et nunquam ingurgitata refundens."

practical outcome, and the more assured he was that ancient Roman vigor could not be grafted upon any living growth of his own day, the more unstinted grew his praises. Dante's hope for the redemption of Italy was in the Holy Roman Empire and Henry of Luxemburg,<sup>1</sup> its representative. Two hundred years later Machiavelli had lost hope of this. He saw that the Holy Roman Empire had become a pernicious sham, and could discern no hope for Italy save in a resuscitation of the irrecoverable prowess of the Romans of old. For this he conceived that a purgation of the peccant humors in the body politic was essential, and the Prince he sometimes conceived of as the man of destiny through whom purgation was to come.

As a process of reasoning, this line of thought must be considered illogical, and we see, in spite of his despairing account of contemporary manners and morals, that Machiavelli could not prevent himself from indulging in the impracticable dream of rousing the virtuous and favored youth of Italy to live up to the perfections of antiquity.<sup>2</sup> I think we must accuse him of

<sup>1</sup> See especially Dante's letter (VII) to Henry of Luxemburg, summoning him to the rescue of Italy, where he says, "Long have we wept by the streams of confusion, and we have implored without ceasing the protection of the just king" (*diu super flumina confusionis deflevimus, et patrocinia iusti regis incessanter implorabamus*). Again, at the close of the same letter, he ends his appeal by speaking of himself and others as "exiles in Babylon, lamenting as they remember holy Jerusalem."

<sup>2</sup> Once at least in an undated letter (written after 1516) to Piero Soderini in Ragusi (see *Lettere Familiari*, XLI), Machiavelli betrays a consciousness that he is prone to use Roman instances beyond the measure of his reader's patience and sympathy. There, after an elaborate specification (cf. *Discourses*, III, xxi) of Hannibal's "crudeltà,

making any such enthusiastic revival seem especially difficult in two ways: first, because his indignation against present abuses made him extemporize and exaggerate the perfections of antiquity, and put him too often into an uncritical mood when he enlarged upon Roman achievements; in the second place, he was prone, like all Italians, — with the solitary and striking exception of Dante,<sup>1</sup> and not excepting many Italians of our own day, — to ignore the difference made in the political temper and future of Italy by the long domination and partial assimilation of her barbarian invaders. It is more and more recognized as a serious mistake to draw the political horoscope of Italy and not to count with the Teutonic blood in the veins of her turbulent Guelph nobles, which has created a new variety of political character on the ancient Italian ground. What Machiavelli and Dante complained of as degeneracy in Italy was to some extent a matter of race.<sup>2</sup>

perfidia ed irreligione," which succeeded as well in Italy as Scipio's "pietà, fede e religione" in Spain, he says: "Ma perchè non si usa allegare i Romani, Lorenzo di Medici disarmò il popolo per tener Firenze, Messer Giovanni Bentivogli per tener Bologna l'armò. . . ." His theme here is that of Montaigne in the first of his essays, — *Par divers moyens on arrive à pareille fin.*

<sup>1</sup> See especially *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, I, xv, where he criticises the Bolognese for a certain "garrulitas," and adds "quae propria Lombardorum est. Hanc ex commistione advenarum Longobardorum terrigenis credimus remansisse." See also Epistola V, 4: "Pone, sanguis Longobardorum, coaductam barbariem; o si quid de Troianorum Latinorumque superest, illi cede." See also Epistola VI, 6, where, addressing the Florentines, he exclaims: "O miserrima Fesulanorum propago, et iterum iam Punica barbaries."

<sup>2</sup> To both of them, however, any deviation, either in action or in genealogy, from the "holy Roman people" was degeneration.

There is plainly a peril as well as a privilege attaching to the Roman patrimony of which Italians are so justly proud; for Machiavelli's critic, friend, and contemporary, Guicciardini, makes the same mistake. Although he finds fault with our author's constant appeals to Roman examples, he quarrels with them because he sees little hope that Italians in his day can be roused to rare deeds. He argues that the sort of appeal made by Machiavelli from Italy in the present to Italy in the past, — to ancient Rome, let us say, from Cæsar Borgia, — shoots wide of the mark, not because Italians have become another race, but simply and solely because circumstances and constitutions in Italy have changed. "Egregiously self-deceived," wrote Guicciardini in his *Ricordi*, "are they whose arguments bristle with Roman instances. Before governing and guiding ourselves by Roman examples, we must contrive that our city shall be organized like Rome, and make over our circumstances to be like those of the Romans. Our actual case is so out of all relation to theirs that plying us with Roman instances is like whipping up an ass to make him win in a horse race."<sup>1</sup> Machiavelli never had the benefit of this criticism, which was written after his death,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ricordi*, CX (*Opere Inedite*, I, 125): "Quanto si ingannano coloro che a ogni parola allegano e Romani! Bisognerebbe avere una città condizionata come era la loro, e poi governarsi secondo quello esempio; il quale a chi ha le qualità disproporzionate è tanto disproporzionato, quanto sarebbe volere che uno asino facesse il corso di un cavallo."

<sup>2</sup> The date of Guicciardini's *Ricordi* cannot be fixed with absolute certainty; but the very first paragraph in it mentions the siege of Florence by Charles V as having been in progress for seven months, and was therefore written in February, 1530, three years after Machiavelli's death.

and a perusal of Guicciardini's comments on Machiavelli's *Discourses* plainly shows that the former was not governed in practice by the very acute distinction just quoted. His general attitude towards Roman history was not far from that of Machiavelli. Both of them, living when the Holy Roman Empire had become an absurd anachronism, felt constrained by this fact to shut their eyes to the whole record of imperial Rome. Thus they fell victims to the artificial traditions of the expiring republic at Rome. From that fatal error Dante was saved, since he could say, "The world was never, nor ever shall be, so perfectly composed as when it took the word of command from the one sole prince and potentate of the Roman people."<sup>1</sup>

Guicciardini, then, offers nothing to take the place of the Roman instances whose use he ridicules, while he fully acknowledges their ideal perfection. He occupies, in fact, just Machiavelli's general position, a current one in the Italy of those days, as to Roman history, and both of them agreed with Dante in regarding the course of republican Rome as providentially perfect in all essential particulars. It is very instructive, indeed, to mark how Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy* constantly reproduce the substance of what Dante says in the second book of his *De Monarchia* about the Roman people before the day of Cæsar. Only altering the scholastic abstruseness of Dante's mediæval argumentation, for which he substitutes something more

<sup>1</sup> *Convito*, IV, 5: "Nè 'l mondo non fu mai nè sarà sì perfettamente disposto, come allora che alla voce d'un solo principe del Roman popolo fu ordinato, siccome testimonia Luca Evangelista."

modern, Machiavelli abounds in concrete instances where Dante is perversely abstract and scrupulously concise. Machiavelli studiously eludes all mention of the will of God and of divine power, in place of which we find mystical references to Fate, Fortune, Heaven, and the Heavens; but he moves along on just the lines laid down by Dante. Dante says that the Roman people did not usurp their sway over all mortals, but laid hands upon it "by divine right."<sup>1</sup> Machiavelli maintains that "the religion introduced by Numa was a prime cause of the prosperity of Rome, inasmuch as that religion framed sound institutions, which in turn produced good fortune, from which flowed success in everything the Romans undertook,"<sup>2</sup> notably in the extension of their imperial sway over the whole world. Here King Numa and the religion "skillfully invented by him" take the place of Dante's "divine right."

Dante again argues most abstrusely: that "Nature, being divine intelligence at work, never can fail of its end. . . . Therefore, seeing that nature cannot accomplish its end by means of one man, — inasmuch as that end involves manifold means of accomplishment, — nature must produce many men who shall severally work

<sup>1</sup> See *De Monarchia*, II, *passim*, especially in chap. xiii: "Desinant igitur imperium exprobrare Romanum qui se filios Ecclesiae fingunt; quum videant sponsum Christum illud sic in utroque termino suae militiae comprobasse. Et iam sufficienter manifestum esse arbitror, Romanum populum sibi de iure orbis Imperium adscivisse."

<sup>2</sup> See *Discourses*, I, xi: "... la religione introdotta da Numa fu tra le prime cagioni della felicità di quella città, perche quella causò buoni ordini, e buoni ordini fanno buona fortuna, e dalla buona fortuna nacquero i felici successi delle imprese."

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its various means. . . . This being the case, it cannot be in doubt that nature has fashioned one place in the world and one people with a genius for universal dominion; otherwise it would fail of its purpose, which is absurd."<sup>1</sup> Machiavelli argues the same point in a more apprehensible because in a more modern manner. Having pointed out that the war with Hannibal in Italy was the one best occasion for utilizing Fabius Maximus and his genius for avoiding pitched battles, Machiavelli proceeds to declare that at a later time, when circumstances had changed, Fabius strenuously opposed Scipio's scheme for carrying the war into Africa. Had Fabius been king of Rome, he might have been worsted in the latter situation, for the lack of power to adapt himself to circumstances. But he was born in a republic, where there were diverse citizens, — diverse in their minds. That republic began by having her Fabius matchless upon suitable emergencies to keep her armies in the field, and then had her Scipio against the time for pressing on to victory. "Hence," he finally adds, "we see a republic's lease of life is larger and its season of fair fortune is longer than a principality's; the former,

<sup>1</sup> See *De Monarchia*, II, where, in chap. ii, Dante speaks of an *ars divina* "quam Naturam communiter appellant," and in chap. vii, after saying, "*sed natura in nulla perfectione deficit, quum sit opus divinae intelligentiae; ergo media omnia intendit per quae ad ultimum suae intentionis devenitur,*" he argues, "*et quia ad hunc finem naturā pertinere non potest per unum hominem, quum multae sint operationes necessariae ad ipsum, quae multitudinem requirunt in operantibus; necesse est naturam producere hominum multitudinem ad diversas operationes ordinatorum. . . . Quae si ita se habent, non dubium est quin natura locum et gentem disposuerit in mundo ad universaliter principandum; aliter sibi defecisset, quod est impossibile.*"

by reason of the diversity of its citizens, being obviously better able than the latter to adapt itself to emergencies."<sup>1</sup>

Probably the completest example of the substantial agreement between Dante's and Machiavelli's conception of the ancient Romans as a providentially chosen people may be found in the details they respectively give about the capture of Rome by the Gauls. Dante says, on the strength of Livy's testimony and that of others, that "although the Gauls upon taking the rest of the city felt sure, under cover of the darkness of night, of success in their surreptitious assault on the Capitol — the one stronghold still standing out against the extinction of the name of Rome, — at that crisis a goose (no creature of the kind having till then been seen there) raised its voice to say the Gauls were at hand, and roused the garrison of the Capitol."<sup>2</sup>

According to Dante's view, this event was one of a series of miracles performed by direct divine interposition in favor of the people chosen for universal dominion. Machiavelli reaches his analogous position by a more roundabout path, bringing in Fortune instead of God. This is an ante-Christian substitution, for Dante

<sup>1</sup> See *Discourses*, III, the whole of chap. ix, and especially, "Di qui nasce che una repubblica ha maggior vita, ed ha più lungamente buona fortuna che un principato perchè ella può meglio accomodarsi alla diversità dei temporali. . . ."

<sup>2</sup> See *De Monarchia*, II, iv: "Quumque Galli, reliqua urbe iam capta, noctis tenebris confisi. Capitolium furtim subirent, quod solum restabat ad ultimum interitum Romani nominis, anserem, ibi non ante visum, cecinisse Gallos adesse, atque custodes ad defensandum Capitolium excitasse, Livius et multi scriptores illustres concorditer contestantur."



himself says in commenting on a speech of King Pyrrhus, "Pyrrhus said that Hera should be called Fortune, but we more rightly and righteously speak of Divine Providence."<sup>1</sup> Fortune, Machiavelli says, being minded "to exalt Rome and lead her on to that greatness which actually fell to her lot, decreed that Rome must be defeated . . . but not totally undone."<sup>2</sup> Many

<sup>1</sup> *De Monarchia*, II, x: "Haec Pyrrhus. Heram vocabat fortunam, quam causam melius et rectius nos divinam providentiam appellamus."

<sup>2</sup> See *Discourses*, II, xxix: "... la fortuna per far maggior Roma, e condurla a quella grandezza che venne, giudicò fusse necessario batterla, ... ma non volle già in tutto rovinarla." The curious state of Machiavelli's mind touching relations between natural events and supernatural influences, a vague and crude belief in which constantly haunted him, is nowhere better portrayed than in this chapter and the following, if they are read in connection with the first chapter of the third and the fifty-sixth of the first book of the *Discourses*, and the twenty-fifth chapter of *The Prince*. The fifty-sixth chapter, just mentioned, maintains that, for some mysterious reason, no serious catastrophe has ever befallen any town or district without some warning prodigy. Savonarola predicted the invasion of Charles VIII, and ghostly affrays were heard in the air at Arezzo before he came; similar warnings came at Rome before the Gauls, and so on. Machiavelli does not pretend to know why this is so, saying it calls for an expert opinion "da uomo che abbia notizia delle cose naturali e soprannaturali, il che non abbiamo noi." Still he makes a suggestion, which is, after all, very like an unconscious reversion of thought to the orthodox belief at least in saints, angels, and intercessors. "Pure potrebbe essere," he says, "che, sendo questo aere, come vuole alcuno filosofo, pieno d' intelligenze, le quali per naturale virtù prevedendo le cose future, ed avendo compassione agli uomini, acciò si possano preparare alle difese, gli avvertiscono con simili segni." This vague notion of interceding intelligences is of course quite compatible with the conviction, so clearly expressed at the opening of the third book of the *Discourses*, that the capture of Rome by the Gauls was a punishment for Roman neglect of religious ceremonial. Some compassionate intelligence of the air saw it coming and spoke with a loud and ghostly voice in the streets of Rome.

minutiæ are then mentioned, and each detail of Roman neglect which brought about the various victories achieved by the Gauls is scrupulously attributed to Fortune's wayward whim. But Machiavelli leaves out the providential geese.<sup>1</sup> In spite of this omission, here as elsewhere he shows quite as firm a conviction as Dante's that the Roman people in every detail of their progress towards universal sway were under the especial care of Heaven, Fortune, or Fate, which always rewarded their unfailing and unflagging *virtù*, — prowess, let us translate it, though it means much more.

In a word, the Romans belong in a category apart from that in which ordinary peoples must be placed by the historian. "Consider well the march of human concerns, and you shall mark," says Machiavelli, "how emergencies again and again arise, and how many are the chances which the Heavens (*i cieli*) forbid man to provide against. Now, when we see the truth of this manifested in what happened to Rome, abounding in *virtù*, in religion, in law and order, we need not make it a wonder when we see the same thing happen far more frequently in cities and countries where *virtù*, religion, law and order are lacking."<sup>2</sup> According to

<sup>1</sup> But see the *Art of War*, VII, in the sixth speech of Fabrizio, where he makes up for the omission: "E non che i cani, si è trovato che le oche hanno salvo una città, come intervenne ai Romani, quando i Francesi [Gauls] assediavano il Campidoglio."

<sup>2</sup> *Discourses*, II, xxix: "Se e' si considera bene come procedono le cose umane, si vedrà molte volte nascere cose e venire accidenti a' quali i cieli al tutto non hanno voluto che si provenga. E quando questo ch' io dico intervenne a Roma, dove era tanta virtù, tanta religione e tanto ordine, non e maraviglia ch' egli intervenga molto più spesso in una città o in una provincia che manchi delle cose sopradette."

this doctrine, incalculable chance and the play of blind Fortune must rule the destinies of corrupt modern states unfortified by the prowess, the piety, and the spirit of law and order which protected ancient Rome.

Machiavelli parts company with Dante when the Roman republic is transformed into a monarchy by the usurpation of Cæsar. But he shares to the full Dante's enthusiasm for "that holy, pious, and glorious people, — void always of greed, the natural foe of any and every commonwealth; always enamored of a world-wide peace with liberty, — that people which plainly neglected its own occasions in order to serve those of the salvation of the human race."<sup>1</sup> These are Dante's words, but, with scarcely an appreciable change in substance, they may be made to agree with the obvious meaning of Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy*.

In these two authors, separated by two intervening centuries, we have the drift of the Ghibelline theory of Italian politics. Having received in Dante's *De Monarchia*, with his concurrent appeal to Henry of Luxemburg, its first and logically complete expression, this theory is carried beyond the circumstances to which it was suited, to an illogical conclusion in Machiavelli's *Prince* and *Discourses on Livy*, where the threatening

<sup>1</sup> See *De Monarchia*, II, v: "In quibus [sc. rebus gestis], omni cupiditate submota, quae reipublicae semper adversa est, et universali pace cum libertate dilecta, populus ille sanctus, pius, et gloriosus, propria commoda neglexisse videtur, ut publica pro salute humani generis procuraret." Compare with this Machiavelli's *Discourses*, I, lviii: "E chi considererà il popolò Romano, lo vedrà essere stato per quattrocento anni inimico del nome regio, e amatore della gloria e del bene commune della sua patria." See also *Ibid.*, lv and lviii.

form of the modern man of political genius (*virtù*) looms large. Opposition to the anarchy produced by the political claims of the papacy is a central point in both writers; but for Dante's enthusiastic adhesion to the holy Roman emperor and empire Machiavelli substitutes a total rejection of the Roman emperors and their empire, which he either abhors or ignores, while he is careful to give a modernized version — minutely thought out and fortified by telling reflections upon the consummate political genius (*virtù*) of the Roman people and by thrilling modern instances, chiefly of what should not be — of Dante's succinct history of the holy Roman people before the time of the empire. Machiavelli sees, however, as Dante could not, because in his time it was hardly true as yet, that the Roman people of antiquity have no part in the political scheme of modern Italy. He sees this as clearly as ever Guicciardini did, and yet he persists in pointing out the unattainable ideal to a generation so incapacitated for political self-control that their only chance for a safe government is the Prince. Be what you are not, and do what you cannot, he practically says to his own generation, and you shall be as the early Romans were, — free. Remain as you are, and do what you must, and you shall be subjugated by the Prince. Whether Machiavelli would have us add that after the Prince has done his work better things are to come we cannot be sure.<sup>1</sup> Machiavelli did not feel sure.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Lettere Familiari*. L.XV. written to Guicciardini on March 15, 1525. "Loderei fare una testa sotto colore. Io dico una cosa che vi parrà pazza: metterò un disegno dinanzi che vi parrà o temerario o

In a word, the sure lesson habitually derived by our author ~~from his contemplation and careful analysis of political events in republican Rome~~ was that Roman experience at large had no practical modern application, no real bearing upon the political problems of his own day. Indeed, although always ready, in the consideration of details, to match any modern episode, where things had gone wrong in his own day and under his own eye, with a parallel from early Rome, he was irresistibly impelled on almost all occasions to discover that the Romans had done exactly right, whereas the men of his day had done wrong. In all his dealings with ancient history, then, Machiavelli resembles no one so much as a geometrician exceptionally deprived of tolerably plausible figures for his demonstrations, — one who has to argue about straight lines which are palpably crooked, planes that are obviously uneven surfaces, and circumferences which plainly have no centers. A geometrician placed under this hypothetical disadvantage would of course find himself obliged to appeal with constant and fervent iteration to the straight line as ideally defined, having neither breadth nor thickness but only length, as well as to the corresponding ideals of the plane and of the circle. May we not regard our author's Roman instances as appeals of this kind, and, in part at least, account for his taking his instances chiefly from Roman history by the influence upon him

ridicolo : non di meno questi tempi richiegono deliberazioni audaci, inusitate e strane, e sallo ciascuno che sa ragionare di questo mondo come i popoli sono varii e sciocchi : non di meno, così fatti come sono, dicono molte volte che si fa quello che si dovrebbe fare. . . ."

in particular, and on his contemporaries in general, of Dante's *De Monarchia*? But would not our exceptionally handicapped geometrician be moved to do more than appeal to the abstruse definitions and axioms of his science? Would he not do his utmost endeavor to procure for his hearers momentary glimpses, at least, of figures drawn with more approximate correctness? However that may be, it is plain that the same artistic temperament in Machiavelli which required the concrete vision of Cæsar Borgia at work in the Romagnas before he could think clearly in picturing the Prince, also required something more than the remote records of early Rome to stir up in his mind the conception of a people abounding in religion, in political genius (*virtù*), and in the spirit of law and order.<sup>1</sup> Some keen glimpses he must have had into modern conditions more nearly approaching his ideals than anything open to his view in the Italy of his day. His was a mind and a temperament peculiarly dependent, as we have seen, upon the stimulus of vivid personal experience. Indeed, when we consider the whole range of his repertory of Roman instances, we find that with all their shortcomings it would be absurd to deny to his sketches of Roman politics and policies a characteristic vividness which forbids our supposing that our author wrote them simply under the influence of Dante, without having achieved a fresh and original point of view for himself.

In seeking to fix upon the particular people whose political soundness may have come within the range of

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 55, note 2.

## MACHIAVELLI AND THE MODERN STATE

Machiavelli's vision in such a fashion as to color his point of outlook upon the ancient Romans, we well to remember what was in his eyes the one qua non of soundness both social and political, the sole foothold for solid virtù in a people. "The indispensable foundations upon which are built all states, be they new or old, or partly new and partly old, are steadfast laws and steadfast arms; and because there cannot be steadfast laws where there are not steadfast arms, whereas if ever you find steadfast arms you shall not doubt of finding laws to match them, I will turn my back upon argument concerning laws and make my discourse about arms."<sup>1</sup> No state that cannot defend itself comes properly within the scope of the science of politics as Machiavelli understood it. This he clearly indicates in his chapter on the principalities of church magnates: "They are alone in having dominions which they have no need to defend, and subjects whom they have no need to rule; their dominions though left without defense are not forfeited; their subjects though deprived of rule take no umbrage nor ever harbor the vain thought of transferring their allegiance. Here then are the only principalities of chartered safety and prosperity. But for the very reason that superhuman intelligence presides over them, they escape from the range of mortal ken, and so I will desist from discussing them. Exalted and sustained as they are by the

<sup>1</sup> *The Prince*, xii: "I principali fondamenti che abbiano tutti gli stati, così nuovi, come vecchi o misti, sono le buone leggi e le buone armi, e perchè non possono essere buone leggi dove non sono buone armi, e dove sono buone armi conviene che siano buone leggi, io lascerò indietro il ragionare delle leggi e parlerò delle armi."

hand of God, his would be a mortally froward and fool-hardy argument which should lay hold of them for discourse."<sup>1</sup> The people for whom we are searching must accordingly possess a striking capacity for bearing arms in self-defense, but it need not possess wealth, for with Machiavelli it was an axiom borne out by the history of all peoples in all ages, that men and not money were the sinews of war.<sup>2</sup> Nor will the people in question be likely to be found among those who had progressed far in the arts and sciences, but they will rather have the rough and half-characterized institutions of a primitive existence. For although we know full well that our author believed the corrupt world of his own day to be hopelessly bound by its deficiencies to the strong rule of the Prince, yet he does say that "Any one with a mind to frame a republic [meaning one after the perfect fashion of old Rome] in these present days would beyond all possibility of doubt find his task of easier performance among mountaineering highlanders with no tincture of civilized usage than among such as are inured to the life of cities, where social life is tainted

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, xi: "Costoro soli hanno stati e non li difendono, hanno sudditi e non li governano; e gli stati per essere indifesi non sono loro tolti, e i sudditi per non essere governati non se ne curano, nè pensano, nè possono alienarsi da loro. Solo adunque questi principati sono securi e felici. Ma essendo quelli retti da cagione superiore, alla quale la mente umana non aggiugnere, lascerò il parlarne, perchè essendo esaltati e mantenuti da Dio, sarebbe ufficio d' uomo presuntuoso e temerario il discorrerne."

<sup>2</sup> *Discourses*, II, x, *passim*, especially: "È impossibile che a buoni soldati manchino i danari, come i danari per loro medesimi trovino i buoni soldati. Mostra questo che noi diciamo essere vero ogni istoria in mille luoghi."

"Dare"



with corruption. Just so shall your sculptor draw forth his beautiful statue more easily from a rough-hewn lump of marble than from a block which another hand has already botched."<sup>1</sup> With these general views of his before us, we can hardly be surprised to find him placing the Swiss of his own day alongside of the perfect Romans of antiquity. "Experience opens our eyes to the fact," he says, "that the only stupendous political growths are those of princes and of armed republics. . . . Rome and Sparta stood through the stress of many centuries always under arms and always free. The Swiss are nothing if not armed (*armatissimi*) and freedom is their element (*liberissimi*)."<sup>2</sup> The incommunicable and untranslatable enthusiasm of these superlatives betrays to us at unawares the otherwise carefully masked play of Machiavelli's mind. His real grasp, his personal comprehension of Roman liberties and Roman warfare, came to him not from what Dante said and his own contemporaries thought, but from his own direct vision of Swiss valor and Swiss independence. Here at last we have a key with which to unlock the secret places of his mind, and we can now account for many of the merits and defects in his interpretation of Roman history. Throughout the whole of

*Discourses*, I, xi: "E senza dubbio chi volesse ne' presenti tempi fare una repubblica, più facilità troverebbe negli uomini montanari, dove non è alcuna civiltà, che in quelli che sono usi a vivere nella città, dove la civiltà è corrotta, ed uno scultore trarrà più facilmente una bella statua da un marmo rozzo, che da uno male abbozzato da altrui."

<sup>2</sup> *The Prince*, xii: "E per esperienza si vede i principi soli e le repubbliche armate fare progressi grandissimi. . . . Stettero Roma e Sparta molti secoli armate e libere. I Svizzeri sono armatissimi e liberissimi."

the *Art of War*<sup>1</sup> the references to the Swiss have that unmistakable note of freshness and reality which captivates the reader's attention, whereas this quality is only too constantly absent from the hazy specifications as to Roman military usage. Indeed, it is quite safe to assume again and again that Machiavelli, when he

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Discourses*, II, xvi: "*Gli Svizzeri che sono i maestri delle moderne guerre*"; and see the *Art of War*, *passim*, for the decisive part which his observation of the Swiss manner of fighting in his own day played in his whole conception of warfare, and especially of Roman warfare. See particularly, in Book I, the ninth speech of Fabrizio, where the Swiss are "*nati e allevati sotto la legge, e eletti dalle comunità secondo la vera elezione*"; see again the twenty-fifth speech of Fabrizio, who is speaking of emergency levies: "*come s' osservava a Roma e come s' osserva oggi tra gli Svizzeri*." In Book II see the ninth speech of Fabrizio, who is speaking of the legion: "*questo medesimo ne' nostri tempi da' Svizzeri, i quali soli dell' antica milizia ritengono alcun ombra, e chiamato in loro lingua quello che in nostra significa battaglia*"; see also his eleventh speech, where Swiss evolutions are quoted as models: "*Fanno gli Svizzeri ancora molte forme di battaglie*." In Book III, Fabrizio's second speech again takes the Swiss as models: "*Donde che gli Svizzeri, per fuggire questo inconveniente, pongono dopo ogni tre file di picche, una fila d' alabarde*"; and in his sixth speech again they are thrice referred to as models. In Book VI, Fabrizio's third speech deals with Roman discipline, to which he attributes their acquisition of vast empire, but only to culminate with the Swiss manner of discipline: "*Vedesi questo modo essere quasi che osservato dai Svizzeri, i quali fanno i condannati ammazzar popolarmente dagli altri soldati*." In vain does Fabrizio in his very next breath go on to talk in all sincerity of Manlius Capitolinus and the awful restraints of ceremonial and oaths used to hold Roman soldiers in check; the key to the whole disquisition is and remains the Swiss. So also in Book VII, Fabrizio, although in his sixth speech he declares himself averse to modern instances ("*lo ragiono mal volentieri delle cose successe de' nostri tempi*"), yet before he has done, has final recourse to the Swiss, saying most emphatically that they are born and bred soldiers to the backbone: "*Ed i Svizzeri sono fatti buoni da un loro naturale uso, causato da quello che oggi vi dissi; quegli altri [Spaniards] da una necessità*."

convinces himself most successfully that he is talking about the Romans and most abounds in Roman episodes, is really working out ideas and vivid impressions based upon his observation of the Swiss.

In all of his writings that have to do with the ancients, Machiavelli was more or less on his good behavior; but in dealing with Florentine history he had his fling, so to speak. The characters of his Florentine record were treated by him as, in his well-known letter from his farm at San Casciano, he tells us he treated the company at a neighboring inn, — "mine host, a butcher, a miller, and a pair of bakers. With these companions," writes he to his friend Vettori, "I play the fool all day at cards or backgammon: a thousand squabbles, a thousand insults and abusive dialogues take place, while we haggle over a farthing, and shout loud enough to be heard at San Casciano. . . . When evening falls, I go home and enter my writing room. On the threshold I put off my country habit, filthy with mud and mire, and array myself in royal courtly garments; thus worthily attired, I make my entrance into the ancient courts of the men of old, where they receive me with love, and where I feed upon that food which only is my own and for which I was born."<sup>1</sup> And

<sup>1</sup> *Lettere Familiari*, XXVI: "Mangiato che ho, ritorno nell' osteria: qui è l'oste per l'ordinario, un beccaio, un mugnaio, due fornaciai. Con questi io m'ingagliofo per tutto di giuocando a cricca, a tricrac, e dove nascono mille contese, e mille dispetti di parole ingiuriose, ed il più delle volte si combatte un quattrino, e siamo sentiti non di manco gridare da San Casciano. Così rinvolto in questa viltà traggio il cervello di muffa, e sfogo la malignità di questa mia sorte, sendo contento mi calpestri per quella via, per vedere se la se ne vergognasse. Venuta

then, after a quotation from his favorite poet Dante, he goes on to tell of his book *De Principatibus*, just finished when this letter was written (December 10, 1513, in Machiavelli's forty-fourth year). We know that by his book *De Principatibus* he means *The Prince*. We shall see, when the occasion arises,<sup>1</sup> that our author's moral indignation against the atrocities of the Prince, so well masked in the celebrated treatise that bears his name, can be tracked down by a careful perusal of his *Florentine History*. Where, then, shall we turn in search of those records of our author's first-hand impressions of the Swiss which seem to underlie his whole conception of ancient Roman warfare and political genius? We have detected these instants of vision, in spite of the mask which elsewhere he conscientiously and in all sincerity imposes upon them, in three well-known passages of *The Prince* and in as many from the *Discourses*, while they have flashed out upon us from almost every page of the *Art of War*. But if the contention is to be taken seriously that his personal observation of the part played by the Swiss in contemporary wars and policies, together with the inferences which he personally drew from such observations, gives the real cue for understanding Machiavelli's Romans, we must in some way catch our author, red-handed as it were, in the act of assigning to the Swiss on their merits a possible rôle

la sera, mi ritorno a casa, ed entro nel mio scrittoio; ed in su l'uscio mi spoglio quella vesta contadina, piena di fango e di loto, e mi metto panni reali e curiali, e rivestito condecientemente, entro nelle antiche corte degli antichi uomini, dove da loro ricevuto amorevolmente, mi pasco di quel cibo che *solum* è mio, e che io nacqui per lui."

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 141-143. See also 97 f. and 99 f.

in his own day of such dignity and such decisive importance that every one must say he viewed them as the Romans of the modern world.

Dealing, in the second book of his *Discourses*,<sup>1</sup> with the whole theme of the expansion of Rome, Machiavelli makes haste to declare that next to the Roman scheme of expansion by the subordinate association of conquered provinces, the best plan is that of the Swiss, who transform each new acquisition into an independent and coequal member of their federal league. Supposing the end in view to be a world empire, the Swiss plan labors, he says, under two disadvantages, each one of which implies a corresponding advantage. The limit of possible expansion is soon reached, because such a federal state is disparted, — centered, that is, in several distinct capitals, between which consultations and debates on policy become impracticable. This is the first characteristic disadvantage. Its countervailing advantage lies in the ease with which a new conquest, once organized as a new and independent federal unit, can be held against all comers. But a federal league centered in several distinct capitals has not the same interest in making new acquisitions which spurs on the enterprise of a sovereign people making each new province into a subordinated associate from which definite resources can be demanded, and so there is no motive for seeking a world empire. This is the second disadvantage, and its countervailing advantage lies in the immunity from constant warfare resulting from this lack of imperial enterprise. After this not wholly enthusiastic

<sup>1</sup> *Discourses*, II, iv.

account of the Swiss plan of federation, our author accentuates the military character of their organization, waxes very scornful in his account of certain Italian leagues not based upon a strenuous military organization, and ends by giving his unconditional admiration to the Roman scheme of imperial expansion.

Machiavelli was not, however, always quite of this mind about the Swiss, as we may learn from a correspondence between him and his friend Francesco Vettori in the years 1513 and 1514. The Swiss and their prospects appear to have been a commonplace of political discussion in Machiavelli's circle just during these years when those hardy northern mountaineers — soon to be driven from Italy by their defeat at Marignano on September 13, 1515 — played a more decisive and memorable part in Italian and world politics than ever before or since. The particularly dramatic intervention of twenty thousand Swiss mercenaries, whose arrival in north Italy shortly after the great French victory on April 11, 1512, at Ravenna, reversed the situation and saved Julius II and the Holy League by driving Louis XII out of Lombardy, came home most electrically to Machiavelli's "business and bosom." It involved him in the great disaster of his life, — his dismissal from office on November 27, 1512. The Florentines had adhered to their French alliance, and, in order to face the swift reversal of fortune involved by the advent of the Swiss, the Soderini government intrusted Machiavelli with the organization of national troops, — the last important duty imposed upon him, and a welcome one, since it required him to translate

into action his hitherto purely theoretical views about an armed people. In the bitterness of imprisonment, and under the physical tortures of the rack, Machiavelli had occasion to read, mark, and inwardly digest the logic of facts; and the result of his experiment which led up to the disgraceful rout of his Florentine levies at Prato on August 29, 1512, is registered by Fabrizio as follows: "Suppose an army has to be created out of whole cloth, and suppose its recruits may be levied gradually, there is no choosing them except by feeling your way, and this requires a lapse of years and incessant personal supervision."<sup>1</sup> This is but a corollary drawn from Fabrizio's preceding statement that "in countries where military service is not habitual, you can never raise emergency levies,"<sup>2</sup> which plainly is the gist of Machiavelli's experience at Prato in 1512.

The question whether or no the Swiss were destined to achieve a world empire was, as we have seen, inevitably in the air among Italian political thinkers during the short time that intervened between the battle of Ravenna and that of Marignano, for just at that time the Swiss appeared to hold the destinies of Italy in their hands. And so Vettori writes to Machiavelli from Rome on June 27, 1513: "I should entirely indorse

<sup>1</sup> See the close of Fabrizio's twenty-fifth speech in the first book of the *Art of War*: "Ma dove s'avesse ad ordinare una milizia di nuovo, e per questo a scerli per a tempo, non si può far questo delecto se non per coniettura, la quale si prende dagli anni e dalla presenza."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*: "L' intenzione mia è mostrarvi come si possa ordinare un esercito ne' paesi dove non fusse milizia, ne' quali non si può avere delecti per usarli allora."

your views, were it not for the high opinion I have of the Swiss. In this last battle they have risen so high in my estimation that I know not what army could be pitted against them.”<sup>1</sup> Farther on in the same letter we read that Vettori looked forward to seeing the Swiss make France their tributary and finally absorb it. In a letter written a fortnight later the same Vettori says, “The Swiss, whom I hold in higher estimation than all the kings in the world, have as their final aim to acquire a permanent base of operations in Italy; their idea is to have the Duke of Milan on their side and to draw a swingeing annual tribute from him.”<sup>2</sup> In Vettori's next letter<sup>3</sup> we find him occupied with the question raised by Casa: Would the Swiss end by uniting forces with the rest of the Germans,<sup>4</sup> or had they, quite apart from traditional feuds with the house of Austria, astuteness enough to see that they must not help the emperor to grow any greater? Another question disturbs him: Would the Swiss plant colonies? On the whole, he thinks not; they are obviously too few in numbers

<sup>1</sup> *Lettere Familiari*, XX: “Approverei in tutto la vostra opinione, s' io non stimassi tanto i Svizzeri, quanto io fo; i quali in questa ultima battaglia meco hanno acquistato tanto, che io non so quale esercito si possa loro opporre.”

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI: “Gli Svizzeri, i quali stimo sopra tutti gli altri re, hanno il fine loro di poter venire in Italia a posta loro, che il duca di Milano stia quasi con loro, e trarne ogni anno grossa pensione.”

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII.

<sup>4</sup> This passage is decisive as to the Italian notion of the Swiss as Germans in Machiavelli's day. (See *The Prince*, xxvi: “le battaglie tedesche le quali servano il medesimo ordine che le Svizzere.”) Germans they were in common Italian parlance, and Machiavelli usually means to include Switzerland when he speaks of “La Magna.”



to attempt such a thing.<sup>1</sup> This somewhat muddle-headed letter from Vettori is of August 5, and is answered on August 10 by Machiavelli, who says in criticising a politic peace which Vettori advocated: "Every time the duke you leave at Milan lacks strength, Lombardy will belong not to your duke, but to the Swiss. . . . This nearness to Switzerland is a matter of too great import to be dealt with casually."<sup>2</sup>

Our author then summarizes the progress of Swiss power. Mere self-defense against Austria was, according to him, enough at the outset. Then campaigning won them increasing military repute. For a time drawing high pay abroad satisfied them; they maintained their rising generation in prime condition for war and got glory to boot. Higher rose their fame, and familiarity with several provinces and many men roused ambition in them and made them keen to make war on their own account. "Indeed, Pellegrino Lorini told me some time ago that when the Swiss came under Beaumont to Pisa, they were always descanting to him on the stanch virtues of their soldiery and saying how it was like the Roman army, and why could they not some day accomplish what Romans achieved? They boasted that they had won for France every victory she had had. Why should they not fight some day on their own account? Now the occasion has come, and they have seized it and entered Lombardy under

<sup>1</sup> The notion of Swiss colonies seems utterly farfetched unless we remember the momentary prestige of the Swiss in 1513, and how the whole world was then on the *qui vive* for a new incarnation of ancient Rome.

<sup>2</sup> "Ogni volta che si lasci in Milano il duca debole, la Lombardia non fia di quel duca, ma de' Svizzeri."

pretext of restoring this duke; but as a matter of fact they are themselves the duke."<sup>1</sup> Then Machiavelli prognosticates their seizing the Milanese entirely and putting an end to the whole ducal family and extirpating the whole nobility of Lombardy. Their next move will be to overrun the whole of Italy for their own behoof. So he emphatically declares their presence in Italy to be a most deadly and serious matter of concern. People are so determined, he goes on to say, that a thing that has not happened before cannot happen now. "My dear fellow," he finally says, "this German flood is so portentous that it requires a portentous dike to hold it in check."<sup>2</sup> And then he urges that the French be brought back into Lombardy in order to stop the flood. "Be quick about it, too, before the Swiss take root there, and begin to taste the sweets of conquest. Otherwise all is over with Italy. . . . I am afraid, not of the Swiss and the emperor that Casa writes you of, but of the Swiss alone."<sup>3</sup> Not that there would be any difficulty in their banding together, however.

<sup>1</sup> "E Pellegrino Lorini mi disse già, che quando vennero con Beaumont a Pisa, spesso avieno ragionamento seco della virtù della milizia loro, e che era simile a quella de' Romani, e quale era la cagione che non potessero fare un dì come i Romani, vantandosi aver dato a Francia tutte le vittorie aveva avute fino a quel dì, e che non sapevano perchè non potessero un giorno combattere per loro proprio. Ora è venuta questa occasione, e l' hanno presa, e sono entrati in Lombardia sotto nome di rimettervi questo duca, ed in fatto sono il duca loro."

<sup>2</sup> "Compare mio, questo fiume tedesco è sì grosso, che ha bisogno d' un argine grosso a tenerlo."

<sup>3</sup> "Bisogna farlo avanti che si abbarbino in questo stato, e che comincino a gustare la dolcezza del dominare. E se vi si apicheranno, tutta Italia è spacciata . . . e ho paura di loro soli, e non di loro e dell' Imperatore, come vi ha scritto il Casa."

To this letter Vettori makes answer at great length ten days later, August 20, 1513, saying many things, but especially dissenting from the alarmist views of Machiavelli about the Swiss as follows: "I am of those who feel great fear of the Swiss, and yet I cannot so account them as to think they may prove to be the Romans come back to life, as was the drift of their talk to Pellegrino; because if only you will read Aristotle's *Politics* aright, and consider the republics that have been, you shall not ever find any republic, which lacks consolidation as the Swiss do, capable of expansion."<sup>1</sup> Then he goes on to point out, as Machiavelli himself does in the passage first quoted above,<sup>2</sup> that all the conquests won by the Swiss hitherto have been made coequal members of their federation. Now they are averse to new members, he says, because they do not wish to share their military earnings with a larger number. "It goes against the grain for them to have subjects, for they would land themselves in civil war about governing them; and, worse still, to defend them would bring expense, and so they are all for levying subsidies. Inevitable dissensions have already sprung up among them."<sup>3</sup> Then Vettori ends by admitting

<sup>1</sup> "Io sono di quelli che temo gli Svizzeri grandemente, ma non fo già conto possano divenire altri Romani, come parlarono con Pellegrino, perchè se voi leggerete bene la *Politica*, e le repubbliche che sono state, non troverete che una repubblica come quella divulgata possa far progresso."

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 66.

<sup>3</sup> "Sudditi non fa per loro tenere, perchè sariano in discordia del governargli, ed oltre a questo gli avrebbero a guardare con spesa, e per questo vogliono più presto pensione. Vedesi ancora tra loro . . . disunione."

that he does not feel so sure on these points as he could wish.

By this letter of Vettori, Machiavelli is placed as it were in the witness box, and called upon to answer categorically just the question which the course of our argument has led us to ask. Is he prepared to count himself among those who, unlike Vettori, "so account the Swiss as to think they may prove to be the Romans come back to life again (*altri Romani*)"? His answer comes back dated August 26, 1513, six days after Vettori's question, and he says: "Where I deem you are utterly deceived is in the case of the Swiss and the degree in which they are to be dreaded. For my part and in my judgment, they are most utterly formidable."<sup>1</sup> Then he says that Casa and many friends with whom he customarily discusses the whole question in hand (*queste cose*) know how low he always has rated Venice because all Venetian feats of arms were achieved by hired mercenaries. "Now," he goes on to say, "the selfsame reasons which made me have no fear of the Venetians make me fear the Swiss. I am ignorant of what Aristotle may say of republics that lack consolidation, but can figure in my mind the rational possibilities of such a case, the facts as they are before us to-day, and the records of what has already been."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Dove io credo che voi v' inganniate al tutto è ne' casi de' Svizzeri, circa il temerne più o meno. Perchè io giudico che se ne abbia a temere eccessivamente."

<sup>2</sup> "Ora quelli ragioni che non mi facevano temere di loro mi fanno temere dei Svizzeri. Nè so quello si dica Aristotile delle repubbliche divulse, ma io penso bene quello che ragionevolmente potrebbe essere, quello che è, e quello che è stato."

Then he makes much of the Lucumones and the Etruscan league which held all Italy up to the Alps until the Gauls drove them out of Lombardy, and apologizes, rather lamely be it said, for the ineffectual career of the Ætolian and the Achæan leagues. It was the fault of their times rather than their constitution, the overshadowing power of Macedonia first and then the masterful strength of Rome that confined them to their nest, "so that it was rather the strength wielded by strangers than any flaw in their native resolution which forestalled their expansion."<sup>1</sup> Oh, no! no subjects for them! so they say now; but events come to pass gradually, "and men are often led on by necessity to do the very thing they were not minded to do, and the habitual gait of a whole people is slow."<sup>2</sup> In Lombardy a duke and the pope at Rome are their tributaries. They count on this revenue and will account the refusal of it as rebellion. Strong measures having been adopted, they will bridle their man when conquered, and so the whole step will be taken. Finally, after this curiously unfortunate prophecy of Swiss aggrandizement in Italy, Machiavelli categorically answers Vettori's question in such a manner as to take back some of his previous implications in favor of future Swiss greatness. "I do not mean that I believe in their making an empire like that of the Romans, but I do believe they may well become the arbiters of Italy,

<sup>1</sup> "Sicchè fu più la forza di altri che l'ardire loro, che non li lasciò ampliare."

<sup>2</sup> "E spesso gli uomini s'inducono per necessità a far quello che non era lor animo di fare, e il costume delle popolazioni è ire adagio."

partly because they are so close at hand, and partly because we are in such disarray and in a bad way generally."<sup>1</sup> Later on, December 3, 1514, Vettori writes to Machiavelli asking him what he thinks of the policy of an alliance between the pope and the Swiss. What had the pope to fear? Vettori asks.<sup>2</sup> To this question Machiavelli makes answer: "He may well be in a state of mind about sudden exactions, and soon thereafter about his own complete enslavement, and that of all Italy, *sine spe redemptionis*. For Switzerland is a republic, and one that is under arms in a sense which has no parallel in the case of any other prince or potentate whatsoever."<sup>3</sup>

Thus, in Machiavelli's correspondence during the very years — 1513, 1514, and 1515 — when we know him to have been occupied in writing *The Prince* and the *Discourses on Livy*,<sup>4</sup> we find traces most unmistakable of a general excitement and enlightening of Machiavelli's mind, and catch in his thought the play of light and heat generated by the dramatic intervention in Italian affairs of the Swiss, one of the first results of which had been the complete wreck of the Soderini government at

<sup>1</sup> "Io non credo già che facciano un impero come i Romani, ma credo che possano diventare arbitri d' Italia per la propinquità e per li disordini e cattive condizioni sue."

<sup>2</sup> *Lettere Familiari*, XXXV.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXVII: "Può dubitare delle subite taglie, e in breve tempo della servitù sua, e di tutta Italia *sine spe redemptionis*, essendo repubblica, e armata senza esempio d' alcun altro principe o potentato."

<sup>4</sup> See Villari's *Life and Times, etc.*, IV, ii. for a discussion of the date of these writings. Cf. also L. A. Burd's Historical Abstract prefixed to his edition of *The Prince*.

Florence, with which our author's political career came to an abrupt ending. The little world in which he moved suddenly collapsed, and he was left so defenseless that on the occasion of a conspiracy against the new Medicean government he was thrown into prison and actually questioned under torture, although his innocence was so complete that he was almost immediately set free. What wonder if, in the writings produced during his enforced leisure, his mind dwelt upon the prowess of the Swiss, and his fears for Italy exaggerated the future possibilities of harm from them? Vettori expected them to subjugate France, and Machiavelli felt sure of their obtaining firm foothold in Italy, where their rule would be *sine spe redemptionis*. Here, then, we have a tolerably complete picture of an empire like that of the ancient Romans created by these new Romans of the Renaissance, the Swiss.

Another point of very great difficulty in our author's treatment of Roman history becomes easier to understand if we are quite clear that Machiavelli gained his real grasp here in the same way in which he achieved his clear conception of the Prince from personal and intimate contact with Cæsar Borgia. We have seen that his enthusiastic adhesion to Dante's view of the divine (or as our author prefers to phrase it, the fortunate) career of the Romans stops short suddenly and most illogically at the moment when Rome ceases to be a republic and becomes imperial. There are passages in the *Discourses*<sup>1</sup> where he seems to have an inkling of the fact, so keenly present nowadays to all students

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Discourses*, I, xxxiv, xxxv, xxxvii, and xlix.

of Roman history, that the final establishment of the Roman empire was but the last step in a gradual transformation of the Roman city-state into a world empire. Nevertheless, it is not unfair to say that this thought never had any prominence in our author's mind, and that his Roman paradigms of political perfection are taken indiscriminately from all epochs of republican Rome, with nothing more than a pronounced habit of dwelling at very great length upon the early and often unhistorical annals. This bias favoring early Rome grew by what it fed on. It was at once the cause and the effect of his confining his *Discourses* to the first ten books of Livy.<sup>1</sup> The last thing which Machiavelli was ready to admit was Dante's pious gloss upon the third evangelist,<sup>2</sup> identifying the sway of Roman emperors with peace on earth and good will to men. This was inevitable if we suppose that the Florentine secretary's real hold upon Roman policy came to him from observing the Swiss of his own day, who, without assisting him in his detailed constitutional analyses, yet opened his eyes to certain simple and sterling qualities in the earlier deeds of Rome which were totally absent from imperial annals.<sup>3</sup> There Machiavelli

<sup>1</sup> The *Discourses*, although unfinished, leave the impression of a work to which the author had little to add. Nor does the fact that they were mainly written between 1512 and 1516, but received finishing touches as late as 1521, agree with the notion that our author contemplated extensive additions. Their full title, *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy*, hardly favors this idea. But see p. 14, above.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 50, note.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Discourses*, I, xxv, where Machiavelli demonstrates that "you reformer of an ancient state who aims to make of it a free commonwealth



certainly found little or nothing to interest him, although Dante never tired of lauding Trajan and other great and good emperors such as Augustus and Titus. Nothing is more absolutely incompatible with strictly and completely centralized power than the genius of the Swiss constitution, which has not changed materially in that particular from what it was in Machiavelli's time. He would therefore be bound to exclude imperial Rome from his survey of practical and scientific politics, so far as in making it he was guided by suggestions and impressions due to the rôle played in his day by the Swiss.

Machiavelli, then, under the influence of events in 1513, 1514, and 1515, just the years during which he wrote *The Prince* and the bulk of his three books on Livy, drew his Romans from the life. Taking the very scanty knowledge of the Swiss within his reach, most of it accurate so far as it went, he idealized them in the vein of Dante and gave us the Romans of the republic at its best as a free people, voluntarily submitting to laws of their own making,<sup>1</sup> and enduring hard knocks and heavy privations in the prosecution of external wars

must retain at least the shadow of its ancient institutions" by quoting the republican institution of a *rex sacrificulus*. He has not a word or a thought for the same policy pursued by Augustus in his refashioning of the Roman republic into an imperial and centralized state.

<sup>1</sup> For his observations of modern peoples "nella provincia della Magna" (among whom he and Vettori both include the Swiss) who voluntarily submit to laws of their own, see *Discourses*, I, iv, — a passage commented on below, p. 80, note. See also *Ibid.*, the Introduction to Book II, where he speaks of "i popoli della Magna" as those who retain in his day something of the political genius of old Rome.

in order to achieve empire.<sup>1</sup> But he did not know any details in Swiss constitutional history, nor did any one else among his contemporaries. In fact, at the time when Vettori and Machiavelli were exchanging their notes of alarm about the future probabilities of Swiss empire, the whole myth of William Tell was just taking the shape in which it has been handed down to us; therefore, if confirmation were wanted for the contention that the general attention of Europe was riveted upon the Swiss and their redoubtable military power for several years between the battle of Ravenna and that of Marignano, it could be found in the rise just at this time of a purely heroic and legendary constitutional history of Switzerland. With this minds less profound than Machiavelli's were content to cover their entire ignorance of Swiss history.

But Machiavelli, although quite content to accept the legendary history of early Rome as historical, was too critical an observer of contemporary facts to be put off with fictions of his own day, and so we hear nothing from him in detail of the Swiss constitution. For all that, he was the first in our modern world to think clearly, convincingly, and fearlessly about the constitutional part which a law-abiding people should play in a well-ordered state. The only modern facts about constitutional history which Machiavelli had at his fingers' ends were Italian facts, more especially those derived

<sup>1</sup> The very liveliness with which Machiavelli in his letters to Vettori insists upon the certainty of a Swiss emperor in Italy, and the fact that he makes no protest against Vettori's prophecy of Swiss rule in France show that Machiavelli viewed the rigorous self-denial and discipline of these highlanders as so many preparations for empire.

from Florence, which he knew better than any one then living. We have then to account for what are in many respects the best chapters of the first book of Machiavelli's *Discourses* by observations made not upon the Swiss but upon Florence and the corrupt politics of Italy. Otherwise the contention, pressed home in respect of the Prince and Cæsar Borgia and also with regard to the Swiss and the early Romans, breaks down by failing in relation to some of Machiavelli's greatest contributions to the science of state. Fortunately, the last third of the fifty-fifth chapter in the *Discourses* is there to help us out of our difficulty. Machiavelli there contrasts Tuscany with other parts of Italy, and, heedless of the contradiction with other passages of his on the corruption of Florence and its neighboring republics of Siena and Lucca, maintains that here the absence of nobles has resulted in a general condition of equality among citizens which ought to make it possible for a man of tact to organize a stable and law-abiding constitutional habit.<sup>1</sup> Machiavelli has here in mind the establishment of steadfast laws, and takes it for granted that

<sup>1</sup> "Verificasi questa ragione" — the contention that in provinces where turbulent nobles are rampant only the strong hand of a prince can bring in a settled government — "con l' esempio di Toscana, dove si vede in poco spazio di terreno state lungamente tre repubbliche, Firenze, Siena e Lucca; e l' altre città di quella provincia essere in modo serve, che con l' animo e con l' ordine si vede o che le mantengono o che le vorrebbero mantenere la loro libertà. Tutto è nato per non essere in quella provincia alcun signore di castella, e nessuno o pochissimi gentiluomini; ma esservi tanta equalità che facilmente da un uomo prudente e che delle antiche civiltà avesse cognizione, vi si introdurrebbe un viver civile. Ma lo infortunio suo è stato tanto grande che infino a questi tempi non ha sortito alcun uomo che l' abbia potuto o saputo fare."

the "prudent man" of his dreams shall have solved the difficulties about discipline and military organization and provided steadfast arms. If we ponder this passage seriously, we shall gather that although the Swiss military organization had no parallel in Italy, yet with good luck and plenty of time ~~Tuscany~~ might be so reformed as to fight her own battles and establish sound constitutional liberty. The common people in ~~Florence, Siena, and Lucca~~ were, our author opined, not hopelessly corrupt after all. Hence he was justified by his own premises in utilizing his own special knowledge of Florentine parties and policies for his scientific and experimental arguments, and as a matter of fact he read the riddles of Roman constitutional history in the light of Florentine politics. The early Roman republic, while in Machiavelli's hands, had as a matter of fact a strange way of turning ultra-democratic, and frequently takes on hues more familiar to us in the fifteenth and sixteenth century Florentine landscape than in the vistas of early republican Rome.

This leaning towards the people did not suit our author's aristocratical friend, Francesco Guicciardini. There is a note of pained respectability in the eminent Guicciardini's comments upon certain chapters of the *Discourses on Livy*. Machiavelli approves of the tribunes of the people at Rome as a magistracy well devised for mediating between the people and the senate, who were grandees.<sup>2</sup> Guicciardini expostulates: "Yes,

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 60 f. and notes.

<sup>2</sup> See *Discourses*, I, iii-vi: Machiavelli argues that the only republic worth having is one which, like the Roman state, can stand the strain of

they did check the power of the nobles," says he, "but what of the license of the people? They encouraged that."<sup>1</sup> Where Machiavelli maintains that constant strife between the Roman plebs and the senate was the root of freedom at Rome, the price paid by the Romans for their universal empire, Guicciardini enters a categorical denial. "These dissensions were a great evil," he says, "and among the many evils in the working constitution of Rome. Military organization was," he adds, "the strong point of the Romans. Indeed, the obvious

growth and empire. We must therefore so order it "che quando pure la necessità inducesse ad ampliare, ella potesse quello ch' ella avesse occupato conservare" (vi, *ad fin.*). In such a state the people must be so free that it can be depended upon in all stress of war; and for this freedom to be maintained the tribunate or its equivalent is indispensable (cf. vi, *ad fin.*: "si dimostra l'autorità tribunitia essere stata necessaria per la guardia della libertà"). This institution in turn presupposes violent conflicts and tumults, such as the Spartan and Venetian constitutions made impossible by lodging all power with the *grandees* (cf. v, *passim*, and in iv, *ad fin.*: "E se il tumulto furono cagione della creazione dei tribuni, meritano somma laude; perchè oltre al dare la parte sua all' amministrazione popolare, furono costituiti per guardia della libertà romana"). Cf. also above, pp. 7 f., note, the citation from *Discourses*, III, i, and at the end cf. I, iii: "dopo molti confusioni, romori e pericolo di scandali, che nacquero intra la plebe e la nobiltà, si venne per sicurezza della plebe alla creazione de' tribuni."

<sup>1</sup> *Opere Inedite*, I, 12: After a careful specification under four heads of the powers of the Roman tribunes, Guicciardini objects that these powers as exercised "non facevano quello che dice il *Discorso*,"—see the citation in the last note,— "cioè che e tribuni fussino uno magistrato in mezzo tra 'l Senato e la plebe [Machiavelli's actual words are at the end of *Discourses*, I, iii, where he says admiringly of the actual exercise by the tribunes of their powers "ordinarono con tante premienze e tanta riputazione, che potessero essere sempre dipoi mezzi tra la plebe e il senato, e ovviare alla insolenza de' nobili"]; perchè bene erano temperamento della potenza de' nobili, ma non, e converso, della licenza della plebe."

defects of their constitution otherwise mattered far less in their military commonwealth than the like defects in our industrial republics of to-day."<sup>1</sup> The unkindest cut of all is where Machiavelli declares that the prerogative of guarding liberty in the state is better lodged in the people's hands than with the grandees.<sup>2</sup> "Quite the reverse," says Guicciardini. "If it be not lodged alike in the hands of both, surely the nobles should have it. They are wiser and of finer mold; the people

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 f.: "Non fu adunque la disunione tra la plebe e il senato che facessi Roma libera e potente, perchè meglio sarebbe stato se non vi fussi state le cagioni della disunione; ne furono utili queste sedizioni, ma bene manco dannose che non sono state in molte altre città. Questo disordine fu dalla origine di Roma, perchè nel principio suo vi fu la distinzione tra' patrizii e e plebei. . . . Fu adunque utile il rimedio che si pose alle sedizioni, ma non già utile il non levare da principio le cause che poi le feciono nascere. . . . Fu eccellentissima la disciplina militare, e la virtù sua sostenne tutti gli altri difetti del governo; e quali importano manco in una città che si regge in su le armi, che in quelle che si governano con la industria, con le girandole e con le arti della pace."

<sup>2</sup> See *Discourses*, I, v: Machiavelli argues that you must first decide whether you prefer a republic like the Spartan and Venetian states, which lasted long but were incapable of expansion and empire, or one like Rome, capable of both these things. Both types have their disadvantages and their advantages. In the latter he maintains that the nobles had not and the people had the prerogative of guarding liberty, and the latter he decidedly prefers. This preference lurks in this chapter, where we read: "O tu ragioni d' una repubblica che voglia fare uno imperio, come Roma, o d' una che le basti mantenersi. Nel primo caso gli è necessario fare ogni cosa come Roma; nel secondo può imitare Venezia e Sparta. . . ." But the apotheosis of the sovereign people is to be found later on in Book I, especially in chap. lviii, where Machiavelli enlarges on "il popolo Romano, il quale mentre durò la repubblica incorrotta, non servi mai umilmente, ne mai dominò superbamente, anzi con li suoi ordini e magistrati tenne il grado suo onorevolmente. E quando era necessario insurgere contro a un potente, lo faceva. . . ."

is crammed with ignorance<sup>1</sup> and all manner of delusions, sure to muddle affairs and to be rash." Then he refuses to argue the point made "in this *Discourse*" (the fifth in Machiavelli's first book) about a commonwealth capable of extending its domain as contrasted with one organized simply to keep hold of what it has already. "What have the people to do with extending anything or maintaining anything? As a matter of fact, Rome was not governed by the plebs; its government was a compromise. Indeed, my conclusions coincide with the mind of all political writers. They are unanimous in preferring the government of grandeës to that of the multitude."<sup>2</sup>

Here Guicciardini is certainly right so far as he means that Machiavelli's account of the republican constitution of Rome was too much like that of contemporary

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Ricordi*, CXL (*Opere Inedite*, I, 135): "Chi disse popolo, disse veramente uno animale pazzo, pieno di mille errori, di mille confusioni, senza gusto, senza diletto, senza stabilità."

<sup>2</sup> See *Opere Inedite*, I, 14-16: Guicciardini says the consuls and dictators as well as the tribunes had the duty of maintaining liberty at Rome, and adds: "Io loderò sempre più che tutti gli altri governi, il governo misto come di sopra; e in uno governo simile vorrò che la guardia della libertà contro a chi volessi opprimere la repubblica appartenga a tutti. . . . Ma quando fussi necessitato mettere in una città o uno governo meramente di nobili o uno governo di plebe, crederò sia manco errore farlo di nobili; perchè essendovi più prudenza e avendo più qualità, si potrà più sperare si mettino in qualche forma ragionevole, che in una plebe, la quale essendo piena di ignoranza e di confusione e di molte male qualità, non si può sperare se non che precipiti e conquassi ogni cosa. . . . il governo di Roma era misto non plebeo. E questa conclusione è secondo la sentenza di tutti quelli che hanno scritto delle repubbliche che prepongono il governo degli ottimati a quello della moltitudine."

Florence portrayed with a bias in favor of the people. But is not Guicciardini's republican Rome the same Florence portrayed with an equal bias in favor of the Florentine nobles? Machiavelli insists that a people is less prone to ingratitude than a prince, supporting his contention with instances<sup>1</sup>; Guicciardini denies his general statement and joins issue with each of his several instances.<sup>2</sup> He fairly loses his temper when Machiavelli defends the treatment of Scipio by the Roman people. Machiavelli declares that Scipio's manner of life was so extraordinary that Cato the elder, "reputed to be a saint," was the first to side against him, saying that no city with a citizen whom the magistrates feared could possibly be called free.<sup>3</sup> Guicciardini here takes to scolding, and says that the mistrust of Scipio sprang from envy and ignorance. Cato had a private grudge against him, or else made him a scapegoat on account of his hatred for the nobility. There was no patriotism involved at all events. As for Cato's being a saint, he was certainly austere and of an old-world severity, but there was a taint of ambition about him. He was a persecutor of the nobles, his tongue was unbridled, and he was constitutionally

<sup>1</sup> See *Discourses*, I, xxix.

<sup>2</sup> See *Opere Inedite*, I, 43-47.

<sup>3</sup> *Discourses*, I, xxix: "E parve tanto straordinario il vivere suo, che Catone Prisco, riputato santo, fu il primo a fargli contro, e a dire che una città non si poteva chiamare libera dove era un cittadino che fusse temuto dai magistrati." Cf. Dante, whom Machiavelli follows in his estimate of Cato (*Convito*, IV, v): "O sacratissimo petto di Catone, chi presumerà di te parlare?" after which he qualifies Cato as among "divini cittadini" whose lives showed they were "non senza alcuna luce della divina bontà, aggiunta sopra la loro buona natura." Such men Dante then speaks of as the hand of God made visible in the Roman empire.



bad tempered.<sup>1</sup> When Machiavelli maintains that the people make fewer mistakes than a prince in the election of important magistrates,<sup>2</sup> Guicciardini returns to the charge and declares the people are credulous and ignorant, so that they frivolously shift from condemnation to approval, and love those they hated, or *vice versa*.<sup>3</sup> Finally, when Machiavelli argues that the multitude is wiser and of greater constancy than a prince,<sup>2</sup> Guicciardini becomes ironical and declares such a thesis a desperate one to maintain, running counter as it does to the generally accepted view of mankind.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Opere Inedite*, I, 46 f.: "E mi maraviglio che il *Discorso* scusi il caso di Scipione, volendo attribuire al sospetto quello che nacque meramente da invidia e da ignoranza . . . e se Catone gli fu opposto, nacque o da inimicizia particolare o da quella inclinazione che lui ebbe sempre contro alla nobiltà, non da utilità pubblica; la santità di chi non scusa questa ingratitude; perchè e costumi di Catone furono santi per essere pieno di quella antica severità e austerità, ma non mancò già di nota di ambizioso, di persecutore della nobiltà, di lingua immoderata, e di acerbità di natura." This cavalier way of polishing off Cato is in striking contrast to the awestruck mood of Dante in talking of the same Roman worthy. Cf. *Convito*, IV, vi: "E costoro e la loro setta chiamati furono *Stoici*: e fu di loro quello glorioso Catone, di cui non fui di sopra oso di parlare." As contrasted with Guicciardini, Machiavelli here most plainly represents the Ghibelline tradition of Dante as against the Guelph proclivities of Guicciardini.

<sup>2</sup> See *Discourses*, I, lviii: "E non senza cagione si assomiglia la voce d' un popolo a quella di Dio . . . erra ancora un principe nelle sue proprie passioni, le quali sono molte più che quelle dei popoli. Vedesi ancora nelle sue elezioni ai magistrati fare di lunga migliore elezione che un principe, ne mai si persuaderà ad un popolo, che sia bene tirare alla dignità un uomo infame e di corrotti costumi, il che facilmente e per mille vie si persuade ad un principe: vedesi un popolo cominciare ad avere in orrore una cosa, e molti secoli stare in quella opinione; il che non si vede in un principe."

<sup>3</sup> *Opere Inedite*, I, 54 f.: "Difficile impresa e molto aliena dalla

These passages of lively argumentation have a vividness that seems miraculous until we finally succeed in making out that the plebs they are talking about is, after all, not the Roman plebs pure and simple but the Roman plebs conceived under the category of the *popolo minuto* of Florence; also, the grandees attacked by Machiavelli and defended by Guicciardini are not always the Roman optimates and their ancient senate, but often the insolent nobles of Florence masquerading as the magnates of ancient Rome. Indeed, our two controversialists are constantly passing backwards and forwards between antiquity and their own times, and fighting out on the arena of Roman history the inveterate battles of the Italian Guelphs and Ghibellines. Machiavelli, being of the latter party, naturally has much in common with Dante, while Guicciardini, himself closely allied to and identified with the Florentine nobility, is


opinione degli uomini piglia senza dubbio chi attribuisce al popolo la costanza e la prudenza, e chi in queste due qualità lo antepone ai principi; e quali quando sono regolati dalle leggi, nessuno che ha scritto delle cose politiche dubitò mai che il governo di uno non fussi migliore che quello di una moltitudine eziandio regolata dalle leggi, alla quale è preposto non solo il governo di uno principe, ma ancora quello degli ottimati. Perchè dove è minore numero, è la virtù più unita, e più abile a produrre gli effetti suoi; vi è più ordine nelle cose, più pensiero e esame, ne' negozii più risoluzione; ma dove è moltitudine, quivi è confusione; e in tanta dissonanza di cervelli, dove sono varii giudicii, varii pensieri, varii fini, non può essere nè discorso ragionevole, nè risoluzione fondata, nè azione ferma. Muovonsi gli uomini leggiermente per ogni vano sospetto, per ogni vano romore; non discernono, non distinguono; e con la medesima leggerezza tornano alle deliberazioni che avevano prima dannate, a odiare quello che amavano, a amare quello che odiavano."

so far carried away by the Guelph enthusiasms of his order that, in criticising the twelfth discourse of Machiavelli's first book, he actually declares that the splitting up of Italy into microscopic states is to be regarded as a good thing. Where Machiavelli and Dante curse, he blesses. In fact, Guicciardini closes his argument by defending the Papal See against Machiavelli's restrained but still passionate arraignment, through which the voice of Dante so constantly reëchoes. "The Church," Guicciardini says, "has opposed monarchies, but it will be hard to persuade me that in so doing it has compassed the ruin of our part of the world, since it has preserved here that political mode of existence which belongs to our remotest antiquity, and best accords with our national inclinations."<sup>1</sup> The papacy, that is to say, has enabled Italy to revert to that primeval condition in which Father Æneas found it when he landed from Troy.

This trampling down of the barriers between antiquity and modern times, involving though it did many fundamental errors in constitutional history, and the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 30: "Però se la Chiesa Romana si è opposta alle monarchie, io non concorro facilmente essere stata infelicità di questa provincia, poichè l' ha conservata in quello modo di vivere che è più secondo la antica consuetudine e inclinazione sua." For all this incidental effect of the policy of the Holy See, Guicciardini entertains an indignation against it which he expresses in no measured terms at the beginning of his criticism of the twelfth chapter of Machiavelli's first book of *Discourses* as follows (*Ibid.*, 27): "Non si può dire tanto male della corte Romana che non meriti se ne dica più, perchè è una infamia, uno esempio di tutti e vituperii e opprobrii del mondo." Such words come with especial weight from one who, like Guicciardini, spent his life in the service of the Holy See. Cf. also *Ibid.*, XXVIII, 96 f., and CCCXLVI, 203.

uncritical acceptance of Livy's account of earliest Rome, was the only course open to Machiavelli and Guicciardini. They lived before the era of historical criticism, nor does it appear that Machiavelli in his broad outline of the part played by the people in Roman history has been at all hopelessly led astray by his method. At all events, the attainable knowledge of his time about the constitutional minutiae of ancient Rome and about early historical records, Roman and other, left him no choice. He has himself complained "that the whole truth about the affairs of antiquity is not known,"<sup>1</sup> and Guicciardini is even more explicit in saying that "all historians, without exception, have erred by neglecting to record certain things well known in their day, a knowledge of which they take for granted; alike in Roman, Greek, and all other histories, we crave information on many subjects, — on the competence and variety of magistrates, on



<sup>1</sup> See *Discourses*, II, Introduction, where Machiavelli seems to have a prophetic foreknowledge of enlightened historical criticism. Praise of antiquity is often based upon self-deception, for which there are many comprehensible occasions, our author argues, and then gives these occasions as follows: "La prima credo sia, che delle cose antiche non s'intenda al tutto la verità, e che di quelle il più delle volte si nasconda quelle cose che recherebbono a quelli tempi infamia, e quelle altre che possono partorire loro gloria si rendono magnifiche e amplissime. Però che i più degli scrittori in modo alla fortuna de' vincitori ubbidiscono, che per fare le lore vittorie gloriose, non solamente accrescono quello che da loro è virtuosamente operato, ma ancora le azioni dei nemici in modo illustrano, che qualunque nasce di poi in qualunque delle due provincie, o nella vittoriosa o nella vinta, ha cagione di maravigliarsi di quelli uomini e di quelli tempi, ed è forzato sommamente laudarli ed amarli."

the constituent parts of the state, the management of armies, the size of cities, and so on."<sup>1</sup>

Machiavelli's vivid sympathy with the career of the Roman plebs was doubtless inspired by his sympathetic relation toward his own Florentine people. Being substantially of them, he felt with the people of Florence, and like them could sympathize with the downtrodden population of the Romagnas. In the same way his stern hostility to the encroaching optimates of Rome springs from exasperation at the living and moving insolence of the Florentine and Romagnol nobles who encompassed him in the flesh. And this naturally brings us to consider Machiavelli's treatment of history after the palmy days of Rome. His mood in recounting modern history stands in the sharpest contrast to his mood in dealing with ancient Rome. It is not too much to say that Machiavelli's characteristic state of mind when he approaches this more modern range of

<sup>1</sup> See *Ricordi*, CXLIII (*Opere Inedite*, 136 f.): "Parmi che tutti gli storici abbino, non eccettuando alcuno, errato in questo che hanno lasciato di scrivere molte cose che a tempo loro erano note, presupponendole come note; d'onde nasce che nelle istorie de' Romani, dei Greci e di tutti gli altri, si desidera oggi la notizia in molti capi; verbi gratia, dell' autorità e diversità de' magistrati, degli ordini del governo, de' modi della milizia, della grandezza delle città e di molte cose simili, che a' tempi di chi scrisse erano notissime, e però pretermesse da loro." Here Guicciardini seems to be calling for just the knowledge which has of recent years been recovered by epigraphy and allied branches of archæology. A more general criticism of the accuracy possible in history is given on the same page (136) in *Ricordi*, CXXI, as follows: "Non vi maravigliate che non si sappino le cose delle età passate, non quelle che si fanno nelle provincie; perchè se considerate bene, non s'ha vera notizia delle presenti, non di quelle che giornalmente si fanno in una medesima città. . . ."

## MACHIAVELLI'S USE OF HISTORY

history is one of indignation not unmixed with  
tain irritable contempt. "Other commonwealths  
had divisions and they have been made little of  
the divisions of Florence extort most particular men-  
tion; other commonwealths have, so far as we know  
them and for the most part, found that one division  
answered their needs, and, by bringing this one divi-  
sion into play, have now fortified and again, as chance  
willed, destroyed the body politic. But Florence had  
not enough of one; she achieved many internal divi-  
sions. . . ." Here our author makes a brief mention,  
in order to draw a[n effective] contrast, of Roman and  
Greek internal dissensions, and then proceeds: "First  
the grandees fell into two parties, then it was the  
nobles against the plebeians, and finally the middle  
class against the plebs. Again and again one of these  
factions came to power, and was instantly divided  
against itself." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the Introduction to *Florentine History*, P.M., 2: "In Roma, come ciascuno sa, poichè i re ne furo cacciati, nacque la disunione intra i nobili e la plebe, e con quella insino alla rovina sua si mantenne: così fece Atene e tutte le altre repubbliche che in quelli tempi fiorivano; ma di Firenze in prima si divisono intra loro i nobili, dipoi i nobili e il popolo, e in ultimo il popolo e la plebe; e molte volte occorse che, una di queste parti rimasa superiore, si divise in due: dalle quale divisioni ne nacquero tante morti, tanti esilj, tante destruzioni di famiglie, quante mai ne nascessero in alcuna città, della quale si abbia memoria. E veramente, secondo il giudizio mio, mi pare che niuno altro esempio tanto la potenza della nostra città dimostri, quanto quello che da queste divisioni dipende, le quale avriano avuto forza di annullare ogni grande e potentissima città. Nondimeno la nostra pareva che sempre ne diventasse maggiore . . ." And then he goes on to say what Florence might have done without factions, and to apologize for occupying his history with accounts of internal broils.

Knowing as we do how constantly Machiavelli read and pondered his favorite poet, Dante, we can find in this scornful account of Florentine corruption and factious ways in politics an echo of Dante. ("Be glad, my Florence, for thou art great," cries Dante; "thy wings are whirring over sea and land, and fame of thee expatiates through hell.") Where robbers were, five Florentines, thy citizens, I found, and stood ashamed, nor art thou by their means advanced to high estate."<sup>1</sup> Nor does Dante fail to denounce the factious wars of Ghibellines and Guelphs. In the sixth canto of *Paradiso* the Emperor Justinian declares the Ghibellines unworthy to appropriate the imperial ensign of the eagle. "Let Ghibellines beware, let them beware, and plot their subtleties under some other ensign: this one is betrayed, I say, by men who part it always from the right. Nor shall this new-come Charles avail with all his Guelphs to beat it down. Well may he dread its talons that have flayed a lion mightier far than he."<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere Dante's remote ancestor, Cacciaguida, tells of the golden age of Florence, before factions had rent the state, and says: "Florence I beheld with such utter peace lapped round she had no cause for tears . . . I saw her people so glorious and so righteous that her lilies had not yet been shamed by flight before the upraised spear, nor yet had faction changed their hue from white to red."<sup>3</sup>

Thus we find Machiavelli again leaning upon Dante in his indignant denunciations of Florentine factions,

<sup>1</sup> *Inferno*, xxvi, 1-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Paradiso*, vi, 103-108.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi, 149-154.

as we have already found that his inspiration came from Dante when he discerned in the prowess and glory of republican Rome an ideal unattainable for modern Italy, — unattainable but still too inspiring not to be dreamt of. His sarcastic utterances about the superabundance of Florentine civil dissensions our author caps with an account of the murders and executions involved at Florence by their persistent recurrence. And so we may be prepared at the outset to find Machiavelli taking great liberties in describing events for which he feels so rooted a contempt. But these were freakish superficial whims compared to his more fundamental and instinctive misconceptions of ancient history. His indignation might be great indeed could he know that this judgment was passed upon him. Let us whisper it with bated breath for fear of his turning in his grave. The fact is that he was not interested in history as such, and only valued it as your M ← ) ★ — chemist values the elements required in the performance of his scientific experiments. With all his indignation and scorn for them, modern events were the only ones which he could thoroughly apprehend; only they counted really, for they constituted the problems which it was his unflagging purpose to solve. The tests and the reactions which he was always applying and scrutinizing in his chemical-political laboratory were always planned with a view to finding the right answer to questions in the politics and policies of his own day. To be sure he was full of indignation when he surveyed the conditions prevailing in the Italy in which he lived, and he inherited so much of Dante's point of view that



he revered the remote Roman past, regarding the records of it in the light of a foil by means of which he could the better show forth the corruption, the rottenness, in the state of Italy as he knew it. Accuracy, as it is aimed at by modern historians, was no preoccupation of his. The *parti pris* of reverence and admiration with which he invariably approached all episodes in early Roman history was even less favorable to the soundness of his presentation of the career of the Romans in republican days than was the scornful mood that shows in his recital of contemporary conspiracies and intrigues to a strictly historical survey of modern times. Facts and events, whether ancient or modern, were valued by him only as helps toward his one consistent goal, the formulation of sound and well-tested principles for the guidance of a new science of statecraft which should meet the new requirements of a dawning era of modern states. - If he had been really interested in the history of the Roman republic for its own sake, it would not have escaped him that events at Rome in the days of Cicero and Julius Cæsar bore a complexion strikingly similar to that which he so clearly discovered in the Italian Romagnas at the beginning of his Florentine secretaryship. He could hardly have applauded the strong one-man power introduced by Cæsar Borgia and at the same time have withheld his approval, as he does,<sup>1</sup> from Julius Cæsar's parallel

<sup>1</sup> See *Discourses*, I, xxxiii, where, commenting on the bad policy pursued at Florence in attempting to destroy Cosimo de' Medici, Machiavelli says: "Questo medesimo intervenne a Roma con Cesare, che favorita da Pompeo e dagli altri quella sua virtù, si convertì poco di

procedure at Rome, if he had not looked at the Romans through modern spectacles as it were, and required them to be the same simple, self-disciplined community alike in the days of Cincinnatus and of Cato of Utica. He was always looking for one thing at Rome and finding it always in spite of history. That one thing was what he applauded in the Swiss of his own day and found absent throughout Italy and southern Europe.

Machiavelli's prevailing mood then, in his *Florentine History* and in his representation of modern history altogether, is a somewhat offhand one, and offers a superficial contrast to his reverent care in discussing ancient history. But in spite of the different angles from which he approaches events in antiquity and events in modern times, he really attaches a value which is more or less the same to all historical parallels whether old or new. His was not the valuation of a historian: he rather prized an event, as a chemist prizes his acid or his salt, for the reactions he could obtain by projecting it into the elements of the particular combination in politics at which he happened to be working. In his eyes the chief use of recording such things as modern events is that they may be so presented as to illustrate three or four leading points of view which he considers of supreme importance for every statesman. These he often states as self-evident, but they

poi quel favore in paura, di che fa testimone Cicerone, dicendo che Pompeo aveva tardi cominciato a temere Cesare. La qual paura fece, che pensarono ai remedj, e gli remedj che fecero accelerarono la ruina della loro repubblica." Cf. also chap. xxxvii. where he speaks of "Cesare, il quale fu prima tiranno in Roma; talchè mai fu poi libera quella città." See also chap. lii, *ad fin.*

are commonly peculiar to himself. Nowhere within his immediate purview was there any people possessing that determination whether for good or evil, that prowess or *virtù*, which could ward off from them the evil hazards of chance and fate and fortune, whose delight, according to our author, is in making sport of feeble and vacillating men and states.<sup>1</sup> Supplement this disconsolate outlook upon the world since the decay of the Roman power with his well-known view that there is no progress in human events but only change, involving at rare and uncertain times and in various places the momentary centering of power and prosperity in some strong state,<sup>2</sup> and you will have Machiavelli's guiding

<sup>1</sup> See *Florentine History*, V, i, and *Discourses*, III, xxxi, where the Venetians are contrasted with the Romans, concluding with the generalization: "Se adunque una città sarà armata ed ordinata come Roma, e che ogni dì ai suoi cittadini . . . tocchi a fare esperienza e della virtù loro e della potenza della fortuna, interverrà sempre che in ogni condizione di tempo e' siano del medesimo animo, e manterranno la medesima loro dignità. Ma quando e' siano disarmati e che si appoggeranno solo agl' impeti della fortuna e non alla propria virtù, varieranno col variare di quella, e daranno sempre di loro quello esempio che hanno dato i Viniziani."

<sup>2</sup> See *Florentine History*, V, i, *ad init.*, and the Introduction to *Discourses*, II, where Machiavelli speaks of the upward trend in states constituted "da qualche uomo eccellente," which from the trend thus given proceed "sempre in augmento verso il meglio." For those born in such states at such epochs to praise antiquity and dispraise the present is a grievous error. But, on the other hand, he says, "coloro che nascono dipoi in quella città o provincia, che già è venuto il tempo che la scende verso la parte più rea, allora non s' ingannano. E pensando io come queste cose procedino, giudico il mondo sempre essere stato ad un medesimo modo, ed in quello essere stato tanto di buono, quanto di tristo; ma vari are questo tristo e questo buono di provincia in provincia, come si vede per quello si ha notizia di quelli regni antichi, che variano dall' uno all' altro per la variazione de' costumi, ma il mondo restava quel medesimo."

generalizations from the events of his own times. From events ~~within his own experience~~, his clear understanding of which roused him to denunciations of the incapacity and lack of purpose shown by the nobility of Florence, and in general by the magnates of Italy, he was confirmed in his intense enthusiasm for liberty and his phenomenal belief in the strength and political steadfastness of a law-abiding people. But he convinced himself that there was ~~not~~ such a people in his world, unless it might be the Swiss, the Germans, or perchance the English.

To him modern times were like a vast surface of waters seething with never-resting and purposeless commotions, save where certain storm centers gathered up the destructive forces of the whirlwind<sup>1</sup> into a gigantic convulsion of the elements, upon which followed for a time the calm that results from exhaustion. These storm centers indicated the presence of Machiavelli's Prince in one disguise or another. Our author is never tired of discovering his Prince in modern history, and even, in an unguarded moment, attempts to make out that Romulus was of this astonishing modern type.<sup>2</sup> The first of these avatars of Cæsar Borgia is Theodoric, around whom, with no little disregard for historical facts,

<sup>1</sup> For a remarkably vivid description of the whirlwind in 1456, see the *Florentine History*, VI, xxxiii.

<sup>2</sup> See *Discourses*, I, ii, where Romulus as a founder is represented as inferior to Lycurgus, and ix, where the slaying of Remus by Romulus is subtly defended on grounds of state policy as follows: "Convieni bene che accusandolo il fatto, l'effetto lo scusi, e quando sia buono, come quello di Romolo, sempre lo scuserà. perchè colui che è violento per guastare, non quello che è per racconciare, si debbe reprendere."

he gathers up the events of an epoch.<sup>1</sup> Then, in the second book of his *Florentine History*, he addresses himself to the annals of his native town and sketches with a master hand the intricate convulsions of the early Florentine constitution.

But here also the storm center is not lacking which almost always plays havoc with the real consecution of Machiavelli's facts in history. The great figure of our author's early Florence is a bloodthirsty tyrant, the Duke of Athens.<sup>2</sup> Though doubtless his power for harm is exaggerated, Machiavelli's Duke of Athens is substantially historical, and for him are found none of those words of commendation enthusiastically lavished upon Cæsar Borgia and upon Cæsar's double, the Prince. This fact alone is significant when we reflect that the *Florentine History* was our author's last work. It implies a recognition of the rôle of morality in politics and a growing sense of moral responsibility.

We might go on through the rest of Machiavelli's long historical work. The fifth, sixth, and seventh books are especially remarkable for his evident struggle

<sup>1</sup> See *Florentine History*, I, the end of chap. v and the beginning of chap. vi (P.M., 18 f.). Machiavelli's description of the woes of discord to which Theodorico's intervention put an end is one of his very finest vivid pictures, colored no doubt from his practical experience of affairs at Pistoia and in the Romagnas; he says: "Vivendo adunque gli uomini intra tante persecuzioni, portavano descritto negli occhi lo spavento dell' animo loro, perchè oltre alli infiniti mali che sopportavano, mancava buona parte di loro di poter rifuggire all' ajuto di Dio, nel quale tutti i miseri sogliono sperare; perchè, sendo la maggior parte di loro incerti a quale Dio dovessino ricorrere, mancando di ogni ajuto e di ogni speranza, miseramente morivano."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, II, xxxvi (P.M., 110-114).

to tell the truth about modern warfare by misrepresenting historical facts. He jeers at the battles of Anghiari<sup>1</sup> and Molinara,<sup>2</sup> ignoring all the solid evidence showing that they were serious encounters; he portrays most whimsically Francesco Sforza, that prince and paragon of mercenary captains, in order to drive home his thesis that mercenary soldiers are worse than no soldiers at all.<sup>3</sup> The great culmination of the latter part of this historical work comes, however, at the end of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth and last book, where he gives a matchless account of two conspiracies and two assassinations, one at Milan, of Galeazzo Sforza, and the other of Giuliano de' Medici at Florence. These pages should be read in conjunction with the longest of all his Discourses on Livy, which deals with conspiracies and bristles with atrocity.

The circumstance that Theodoric, the Duke of Athens, Francesco Sforza, and two assassinated princes are selected as the focal points around which Machiavelli groups the history of Florence in spite of his luminous, if in some details inaccurate, sketch of Florentine constitutional history, may serve to illustrate what I have already expressed by saying that our author was a biographical historian after the manner of Plutarch. Here and there, too, we have very striking illustrations of what Guicciardini criticised in Machiavelli as a too great fondness for extraordinary

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, V, xxxiii, *ad fin.* (P.M., 265 f.).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, VII, xx (P.M., 350).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, VI, *passim*, especially chap. xx (P.M., 294 ff.).

courses.<sup>1</sup> A palmary case is the purely fictitious account given of certain disturbances at Prato in 1470. What really happened was a rather ludicrously abortive attempt to excite insurrection. But Machiavelli is not content with anything so tame, and says, quite in the vein of *Puss in Boots* or *Jack the Giant-Killer*, that Bernardo Nardi, the would-be revolution monger, seized the person of the Florentine governor, Cesare Petrucci, and, by way of forcing on the uprising, gave orders for him to be hanged out of the window of his own official residence. The governor, however, when he was close to the window and the noose had already been fastened around his throat, made an extremely convincing speech and thus saved his neck.<sup>2</sup>

This romance is on a par with that curious mosaic of episodes from Greek, Roman, and modern biographies, strung together with remarks on infantry tactics and put forth by Machiavelli as the *Life of Castruccio Castracani*. Finally, the crowning instance of what ~~we may, for lack of a better term,~~ describe as our author's deviation into "yellow journalism," is his report, in the last book of his *Florentine History* and again with more detail in the third book of his *Discourses on Livy*, of the lurid and unmentionable tale about Catharine Sforza and her children.<sup>3</sup> Her most recent biographer, Count Pasolini, has conclusively shown that there

<sup>1</sup> See the closing words of his considerations on chap. xxvii of *Discourses*, I; where he describes Machiavelli as "lo scrittore al quale sempre piacquono sopra modo e remedii straordinarii e violenti" (*Opere Inedite*, I, 42). See also pp. 57 f., above, note.

<sup>2</sup> *Florentine History*, VII, xxvi, *ad fin.* (P.M., 357 f.).

<sup>3</sup> See *Ibid.*, VIII, xxxiv, *ad fin.* (P.M., 418), and *Discourses*, III, vi.

can have been no foundation for this gross calumny. Therefore, seeing that Machiavelli's first embassy was to Catharine Sforza, whom he saw and talked with repeatedly, we must regard his adopting this foul libel upon her either as additional proof of his peculiar incapacity for reading character, or as a second instance, like that of the episode at Prato, where he has shown himself a genuine *popolano* by substituting folklore for history; or, as a last resort, we must really convict him of harboring malice against a woman who certainly outwitted him.

I have already dwelt upon the divergencies of opinion between Machiavelli and Guicciardini. There was, however, substantial agreement between their leading views, excepting always their inveterate controversy about the competence of the people, and their characteristic methods were practically identical. Machiavelli originated, and Guicciardini adopted, a new and very fruitful way of dealing with history. In a certain sense they were both following in the footsteps of Tacitus and other classical historians when they began to scrutinize events primarily with a view to extract from them political maxims; but our modern writers did this with a modern purpose. They were striving to organize a modern science of government such as that which dawned upon Plato and was wrought out for antiquity by Aristotle. Machiavelli's eclipse under the anathemas of Rome, which took place by the middle of the sixteenth century, in 1559, left the field open to be more or less monopolized by Guicciardini, whose merits were greatly overestimated as long as the undue depreciation of ov



author lasted. Guicciardini's maxims were disentangled from their contexts and published apart in a special chapter by that ponderous Venetian Dryasdust, Tommaso Porcacchi, whose edition of Guicciardini's history was very current for two centuries; the college libraries of Oxford bear witness to that, and to this editor's exaggerated appreciation of Guicciardini. It is indeed a striking note of inferiority in Guicciardini that his political and historical dicta have so readily lent themselves to this refashioning of them into elegant extracts, suggested by his own *Ricordi*. The same cannot be said of Machiavelli's maxims, for one of the most fruitful sources of injustice to him is the necessity, apparently laid upon those who talk about him, of taking his reflections out of their contexts in quoting him. Indeed, this fact must excuse the length of several quotations made in the present work.

Nevertheless, although we exonerate Machiavelli from any complicity or connivance with those who after his day occupied themselves in preparing what we may not unjustly term political cookery books, supplying the formula for the right political sauce to suit every man's palate, we must criticise our author's laboratory practices upon history. His very disjointed method of picking and choosing, for the establishment of a leading principle, episodes from early Rome, mediæval Venice, modern France, and Switzerland seriously affected his most general survey of the broad course of historical events. In the forty-seventh and forty-eighth chapters of the first book of his *Discourses*, Machiavelli dwells upon what we may call the political

nearsightedness of the mass of the people, who, he con-  
tends, may very easily go wrong about a general propo-  
sition and yet, when called upon to judge of the several  
particulars which it sums up, their judgment is sound  
and just. The very special use to which he put history  
bred in our author this strange myopia which left him  
powerless to generalize broadly from the detailed facts  
of history which he nevertheless utilized in formulating  
maxims that have served ever since for the axioms of  
modern statecraft. For the genuinely pious sweep of  
 Dante's mind that enabled him to read the will of God  
 writ large in the annals of old Rome and the Roman  
 empire even down to the Holy Roman Empire of later  
 days, Machiavelli's faculties were ill adapted. Warped  
 as they were by the consideration of special modern  
cases with cross lights flashed upon them from his reper-  
tory of disjointed facts ancient and modern, they were  
 just capable of the recognition of lucky eras when vigor  
 and political genius were in the ascendant, and eras  
 when the whole trend of human affairs was downward,  
 unlucky eras in which it was better not to have been  
 born. Such an era of corruption and decay he was apt  
 to believe was the one in which he himself lived. If  
 we turn again to his Introduction to the second book  
of the Discourses, where this strange outlook upon the  
course of history is most feelingly set forth, we find  
 him saying: "I judge the world has always been up to  
the same mark, always contained a given amount of  
good and a given amount of evil. There have been  
ups and downs from one region to another in the distri-  
bution of this good and this evil, as we may gather from

what record there is of ancient times. Their variations, now here, now there, depend on varying customs, but the world as a whole suffers no alteration. The only difference lay in having its center of political vitality first in Assyria, then shifted to Media, and afterwards to Persia, until at last it swerved to Italy and Rome. And if since the Roman empire no durable empire has followed, nor any place where the world has held its political vitality centered at one point, that vitality has nevertheless been disseminated broadcast among nations where strenuous living was the rule."<sup>1</sup>

Here undoubtedly lurks, chiefly in the play given to the word *virtù*, — an important term which commits Machiavelli through Dante to generalizations that lay beyond his ken, — some sort of vague theory of animal spirits or vital force which was borrowed from the medical science of his day by Machiavelli, of whose interest in medical topics something will come home to us in examining his idea of morals. But the last point requiring elucidation in this examination of Machiavelli's use of history, and of the largest generalizations which his method of specifying disjointed instances left him the power to make, is a passage in his latest work, the *Art of War*. Near the close of the second book, he says: "Now therefore the truth is that where you have several empires, several men of notable vigor will appear. It follows of necessity that with the decline of these empires comes gradually the decline of political efficiency which goes hand in hand with the decline of opportunity for men of notable vigor. Now when it came to pass that

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 96, note 2; see also pp. 43 f. and note.

the Roman empire waxed by the waning of all the commonwealths and kingdoms of Europe and Africa, together with the greater part of those in Asia, no outlet for efficiency was offered anywhere but in Rome. From this it came to pass that men of notable vigor began to be scarce in Europe and in Asia, and finally political efficiency went into a hopeless decline. Inasmuch as it was all centered in Rome, when corruption overtook her the whole world so to say was corrupted; so that the peoples of Scythia made their booty of that empire which having nullified efficiency in others had itself become ineffectual."<sup>1</sup> In spite of what he goes on to say about the debilitating effects of Christianity, Machiavelli, could he have foreseen the expansion of the modern system of independent great powers, each developed along the lines of his new science of state, might have turned optimist. Certainly one of the soundest historical generalizations to be derived from his last bird's-eye view of history is that the world's welfare is best assured and maintained by the simultaneous existence and vigorous growth of several strongly knit imperial states.

<sup>1</sup> "Sendo adunque vero che dove siano più imperj, surgano più uomini valenti, seguita di necessità che spegnendosi quelli, si spenga di mano in mano la virtù, venendo meno la cagione che fa gli uomini virtuosi. Essendo pertanto dipoi cresciuto l' imperio Romano, ed avendo spente tutte le repubbliche ed i principati d' Europa e d' Affrica, ed in maggior parte quelli dell' Asia, non lasciò alcuna via alla virtù se non Roma. Donde ne nacque che cominciarono gli uomini virtuosi ad essere pochi in Europa come in Asia; la quale virtù venne dipoi in ultima declinazione, perchè sendo la virtù tutta ridotta in Roma, come quella fu corrotta, venne ad essere corrotto quasi tutto il mondo; e poterno i popoli Sciti venire a predare quell' imperio, il quale aveva la virtù d'altri spento e non saputo mantenere la sua."

## CHAPTER III

### MACHIAVELLI'S IDEA OF MORALS

The Prince and Machiavelli's private life — The real Machiavelli — The artificial Machiavelli — Absorption in the science of state — Patriotism — The atrocities of the Prince suggested by a medical point of view — The "Prince" and the "Boss" — Modern corruption a bodily disease — Machiavelli's hypochondria — Switzerland, Germany, and England the only healthy bodies politic — Machiavelli's fiasco at Prato — His estimate of religion — The Prince a medical executioner — The Duke of Athens — Machiavelli and Savonarola — The Church of Rome — Political flaws in Christianity — Meekness — The Roman worship of emperors — The Prince, like the emperor, stood outside of morality — Summary.

5 The first point to consider in connection with Machiavelli's idea of morals is of course his own practice in his own life. Be it remembered, however, that Machiavelli's private life hardly concerns us as students of his science of state, and that, as we have seen, it is practically withdrawn from our view.<sup>1</sup> Had he not been the victim of serious misconception and misrepresentation, because of a supposed irreligion and immorality detected in him by those who see him lurking under the disguise of the Prince, there would be no need for any attempt to penetrate into the privacy of his home. But as a matter of fact the atrocities of Cæsar Borgia and the Prince which Machiavelli portrayed have reacted upon his private reputation. That pitiless and unswerving cleverness, with little or no regard for the lives and the

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 4 f.

happiness of individual members of society, has been attached to Machiavelli privately and personally. This attitude towards him is neither logical nor founded upon facts known about him. We might with equal justice dwell upon certain eloquent passages in the *Discourses* and the *Florentine History*, and make him out to be a martyr in the defense of liberty. When all available facts have been scrupulously scanned, he offers nothing remarkable as a private individual. The Italian morality of his day to which Machiavelli appears, on the whole, to have conformed, was that of the workaday Florentine people, to whom, in spite of his pedigree and of certain past glories and present sadly insufficient possessions,<sup>1</sup> he belonged. His rule of private conduct was not that of princes or ambassadors, who were far removed from him in their private capacity, although, in performing his modest and subordinate duties, he spent much time with them over public affairs. Machiavelli was not in his own estimation a person of enough consequence in the world to dream of being aggressively vicious.

One letter to his boy Guido, with the answer which Guido wrote back, reveals him in the anxious simplicity of his frugal home existence; the letter was written shortly before he died, from Imola in the Romagnas to little Guido in Florence. "Guido, my darling son, I received a letter of thine and was delighted with it, particularly because you tell me of your full recovery,—the best news I could have. If God grants life to us

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Lettere Familiari*, I, XI (where he writes "nacqui povero, ed imparai prima a stentare che a godere"), XIX, XXVI, *ad fin.* ("e della fede e bontà mia ne è testimonio la povertà mia"), and XXXIII.

both, I expect to make a good man of you, only you must do your dutiful share. You know all my grand friends? Well, I have just struck up a new friendship with Cardinal Cibo, and we get on so well that I am in ecstasies. This friendship will be a good thing for you. But you must get on with your schooling. Now you have no excuse for shirking the heavy work of learning letters and music, since you see what great honor I get with the small degree of prowess (*virtù*) that I possess. So now, dear boy, if you have any mind to please me and get profit and credit for yourself, work well at your schooling. Help yourself, and the whole world will help you." Then follow directions about the family mule, which appears to have been fractious: "Unbridle him," says Machiavelli, "take off the halter, and turn him loose at Montepulciano. The farm is large, the mule is small, and so no harm can come of it. . . . Tell your mother, with my love," he adds, "that I have been on the point of leaving for several days, but am kept. I never in my life was so keen to be back in Florence. Just you bid her not to be nervous, I shall surely be home before any trouble comes." This is an allusion to the impending campaign of Charles V against Florence. "Give a kiss to Baccina, Piero, and Totto; I wish I knew his eyes were getting well. Be happy, and spend as little as you may. . . . Christ have you in his keeping."<sup>1</sup> This letter together with a very dutiful and affectionate answer to it made by Guido, and a short and touchingly intimate note from Marietta, Machiavelli's wife, written to him during one of his prolonged

<sup>1</sup> *Lettere Familiari*, LXXXI.

absences (probably in 1506), give us such glimpses as we still may have into our author's most intimate domestic relations.<sup>1</sup> We may surely, without finding in them anything particularly exquisite so far as he is concerned, make bold to say, nevertheless, that they are too normal and simple-minded to suit that bugbear of Christendom, the Machiavelli whom Europe, and especially England, was long schooled to abhor as the very incarnation of the personal devil. At the same time it is fair to observe that Machiavelli seems never really to have used his relations with grandees to help on his sons in the manner suggested by what he says to Guido of his friendship with Cardinal Cibo.

There is, however, a less domestic Machiavelli, who still is rather simple-minded in the affectation of a gentlemanly rakishness which was, to a considerable degree, put on. This Machiavelli we find now and again in correspondence with men like Francesco Vettori, ambassador at Rome, or with the Lord President of the Romagnas, Francesco Guicciardini, the historian. A typical instance of his rather overdoing the jaunty airs of a *roué* comes before us in a letter which he wrote in January, 1514, to Vettori. Here he is answering a communication in which, as in several of Vettori's letters, the ambassadorial writer apparently went into rather frigid details about his own amours. In answer, Machiavelli produces a sonnet about the "boy archer" by whom his heart has been pierced, and all the rest

<sup>1</sup> See Villari, *Life and Times, etc.*, II, Appendix, Document VI, 567, and on pp. 280 ff., there are further references to the family correspondence.



of it. Then follow the vaguest possible generalities of railing against Cupid the thief, and the desperate straits to which Machiavelli has been reduced.<sup>1</sup> In this letter, though he quite imposes upon his correspondent, he does not succeed in giving any body of reality to all this precious absurdity.

Whatever they may imply as to his conduct, such utterances are not characteristic of Machiavelli. He confesses as much when he goes on, in the same letter, to say that if any one glanced at the correspondence passing between him and Vettori, "He would at first think us men of gravity, absorbed in important concerns. No thought, he would fancy, that had not intrinsic importance and worth could find lodgment in our discourse. But then he would turn over the page and make out the pair of us to be light-headed triflers quite engrossed by vanities." Machiavelli then solemnly defends this inconstancy because it mirrors the waywardness of nature, and, he adds, "He who imitates her is above reproach." In the last half of this letter our half-heartedly gay Lothario becomes himself again. He grows instantly genuine and interesting while discoursing about the prospects in his proposed new principality of Giuliano de' Medici, a brother of Leo X, to whose enlightenment in these new responsibilities he had just been devoting *The Prince*. This letter was written in 1514; Giuliano died in 1516, before *The Prince* was actually circulated in manuscript,<sup>2</sup> with

<sup>1</sup> *Lettere Familiari*, XL. Cf. also XXXIII and XXXIV.

<sup>2</sup> For the whole intricate detail concerning the writing of *The Prince*, its circulation in manuscript, its pirating by Nifo, and its final printing

a dedication to Giuliano's nephew, Lorenzo de' Medici, the father of Catherine de' Medici. When he wrote the letter to Vettori just quoted, Machiavelli saw in Giuliano the new Italian prince destined to follow the forceful example of Cæsar Borgia, — to drive the foreigners away and to consolidate united Italy.

To gather up for a moment our impression as to Machiavelli's idea of morals and conduct, let us say that he apparently lived his life, as it were, in water-tight compartments. He was several things to several men. At home he was a dutiful enough father, but in discussing politics he often played a part and affected the talk of Vettori's set, chiefly in order to persuade him and them to listen to the new political gospel of *The Prince*. It need not, however, for a moment be supposed that playing this part was either very irksome or very uncongenial to our author; but we are probably borne out by the facts in opining that there is a greater genuineness in Machiavelli's kindly self, as shown in the bosom of his family and with certain humble friends who lived far from courts and policies but near to his heart.

Machiavelli was doubtless quite right in supposing that Vettori required to be met halfway in his shabbily disreputable gossip about love intrigues; for Vettori was apparently the type, in Machiavelli's day, of those dull Florentines with whom Sir Robert Dallington consorted nearly a hundred years later. Sir Robert, speaking of the Florentines, declares himself "of the Frenchman's mind that could not find where that great wit of theirs

in 1532, five years after Machiavelli's death, see the biographical note prefixed by Mr. L. A. Burd to his edition of *The Prince*.

lay, whatsoever either by Machiavelli his report in his History or in his person may be alleadged."<sup>1</sup> Sir Robert, the least insular and prejudiced of Britons, proceeds feelingly to lament that he could get no rational conversation out of the Florentines with whom he consorted. They would break off with you, he complained, unless you were minded to talk with them of the stews. If Sir Robert had only possessed the more easy-going, laxer standards of Machiavelli, he might, by judiciously unbending, have unlocked the confidences of these offish Florentines, and could have won them to his political and historical topics by simulating, as our author without compunction repeatedly did, a rakishness in conversational and epistolary morals which he was far from carrying out in his acts.

The real Machiavelli was living on side by side with this whimsical and posturing sonneteer of the correspondence with Vettori; for we find three short letters written on dates ranging between 1513 and 1517,<sup>2</sup> where his hopes, his family affections, his straits and distresses, are all clearly shown. These letters are to a nephew whom Machiavelli had brought up from a child and loved as if he were his own instead of his sister's son. There is certainly a touch of otherworldliness in this peculiar relation so piously recognized by the nephew, who begins his letters to his uncle Niccolò, *Honorando in luogo di carissimo padre*. This Giovanni Vernaccia was trading in the Levant during our author's

<sup>1</sup> See *A Survey of Tuskany*, 61. See below, Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> See Villari's *Life and Times, etc.*, II, Appendix, Document VII, 567-571. See also pp. 281 ff. in the same volume.

correspondence with him. In February, 1515, we find Machiavelli lamenting his own inactivity and the rigors of his fate: "Nothing but health is left me to help myself and all who are mine withal," he writes; "I jog on from hand to mouth, keeping a sharp lookout in order to seize good luck if ever it comes, and while it stays away to practice resignation. Whatever my condition, you are always where you always were with me,— I am yours. Christ have you in his keeping." On the following August he again writes, and begins by excusing his silence; bad times must account for it. "They have made me forget who I am, but have not made me forget you, whom I always must regard as a son," he says, and in closing begs Giovanni to look to his health and wealth, "for your doing well must always be welcome to any one who is your wellwisher." Three months later he complains that his letters have not been received, and fears Giovanni may think him remiss, as indeed the poor fellow did. "I have not forgotten you," he adds, "for fortune has left me naught but my relations and friends; these are my stock in trade, particularly the ones that I hold dearest, as I do you. Indeed, I live in the hope that when fortune puts any honorable career in your way, you will pay back my boys in the coin I have bestowed on you." Two years later Machiavelli again assures his nephew Vernaccia that, next to his sons, he holds him dear, reporting at the same time an improvement in his prospects. He has not regained the office which he lost five years before, in 1512, but he has occasional employment.

The most touching of all the letters to Vernaccia, however, is an early one, written in June, 1513, just after Machiavelli's cruel imprisonment. "No wonder I have not written, my dearest Giovanni," writes the uncle; "I have been dismissed my place, and within an ace of losing my life. God and my innocence saved me. All other calamities, imprisonment and the rest of it, I have put up with. Now I am well, thank God, and I get along as I can for a living while the heavens still frown upon me." Such are the glimpses we can get of Machiavelli in his private capacity, — an anxious father of sons, an affectionate and rather nervous husband, sometimes in panics about his wife's and his children's illnesses and ailments as well as about his own. He was on the whole a loyal friend, and the thought of educating his sons and establishing them in life was familiar to his mind.

Nothing of all this does he reveal willingly, or even distantly allude to, in his letters to that uncrowned familiar of kings, popes, and emperors, Francesco Guicciardini, written for the most part toward the close of his life.<sup>1</sup> He makes a manful struggle to keep on his mask here also, as he did with Vettori. Their first letters are full of friendly banter, but Guicciardini's knowledge of the world makes him very difficult to impose upon. He soon perceives the real Machiavelli, and pays him the great compliment of taking a personal liking to him. He helps him to adopt the right tone in the *Florentine History*, which Machiavelli had in

<sup>1</sup> *Lettere Familiari*, XLIX, LI f., LVI, LVIII, LX ff., LXIV f., LXVIII f., LXXI-LXXIII, LXXIX.

hand for the Medicean Pope Clement. They exchange opinions and witticisms about Machiavelli's comic writings, so highly appreciated by Lord Macaulay. Indeed, Machiavelli looks after Guicciardini's business matters now and again, and finally advises him in the delicate concern of marrying off a daughter.<sup>1</sup> Machiavelli's advice upon this important point consists in a citation of two verses from the sixth canto of Dante's *Paradiso*. These he pieced together with a very lame and prosaic line which, after a fashion, reproduces the gist of Dante's meaning. The whole quotation runs as follows :

"Four daughters had, and every one a queen,  
Ramondo Beringhieri ; this was done for him  
By Romeo, a wanderer of low estate."

Machiavelli's advice was that Guicciardini should strain his resources, and if necessary borrow money, in order to make a brilliant match for his eldest daughter ; then he would find it easy to bestow the others advantageously, without giving them large portions. This had been Romeo's advice to Ramondo Beringhieri, who had accordingly given the half of Provence for the dowry of the eldest, and made her queen of France. Her sisters afterwards married kings, who required little or no dowry.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Guicciardini evidently found this the most difficult of all the problems of his private life. Cf. *Ricordi*, CVI, 123; CCCLXXXVIII, 218 (*Opere Inedite*, I).

<sup>2</sup> *Lettere Familiari*, LVII : Machiavelli's quotation ran

"Quattro figlie ebbe, e ciascuna regina,  
Della qual cosa al tutto fu cagione  
Romeo, persona umile e peregrina."

*Paradiso*, vi, 134, here misquoted, runs

"Ramondo Beringhieri, e ciò gli fece."

There is small occasion for discovering anything strikingly immoral or unmoral in the line of action here suggested to Guicciardini. The notable point rather is Machiavelli's ability to detach himself from the simpler problems of his own family life, which required and received from him no such long-headed scheming. Perhaps it was a help to him that his own family affairs were of the homeliest and most straightforward kind, requiring him simply and solely to struggle on as best he could for a bare subsistence, to secure a fair education for his boys, and to keep them, their sister, and their mother from bodily harm and want. Thus his strangely resourceful mind was left all the freer to exercise itself impersonally and dispassionately upon such problems as offered themselves.

Throughout his correspondence there is one thing about which he is always the same, always keen, and always all himself, and that is the fate of Italy and the possibility of excluding from its borders the foreign armies of invasion.<sup>1</sup> Guicciardini, when he had Machiavelli's advice about the marriage question, complained that he was obliged to ransack the whole of the Romagna to get a copy of Dante, and then, having made a shift to find the passage quoted, could not understand it for lack of an explanatory gloss. "I fancy," he writes, "that this is just another of those out-of-the-way notions which you always have up your sleeve."<sup>2</sup> Again, when

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Lettere Familiari*, XXIII, XXV, especially *ad fin.*, XXVII, XXXVII, XL, XLI, LXIV, LXV, LXVIII, and especially LXIX, LXXI, LXXVIII, LXXXII, LXXXIV.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, LXIII, *ad fin.*

at an earlier date Machiavelli was negotiating at Carpi to get a Minorite preacher for the Florentine Weavers Company, Guicciardini writes to chaff him about the sort of man he had selected, and says, "The fact is, you have such a reputation for holding views that are for the most part far beside the mark of ordinary minds, and for inventing novel and unaccustomed devices, that people are expecting you to bring back with you an unprocurable friar of the sort that can't be found."<sup>1</sup>

We see then that Machiavelli, though fond of all things extraordinary, regulated his modest and humdrum household and family matters in a perfectly usual and commonplace manner, and was really not very continuously absorbed by them. Their extreme simplicity, in fact, left him all but wholly free to expatiate himself, and, when he adventured into regions of political thought untrodden as yet by any of his contemporaries, he was hampered by few of the usual limitations of the head of a family. His intellect was emancipated and left to its own purely theoretical devices more completely than that of any more important political man of his day,<sup>2</sup> and he conceived of solutions in practical politics which could not have dawned upon one less untrammelled than he. On the whole, our author's private morality turns out to be just what could have fairly been expected from

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, L.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII, written to Francesco Vettori on the 9th of April, 1513, where Machiavelli says: "La fortuna ha fatto che non sapendo ragionare nè dell' arte della seta, nè dell' arte della lana," the silk and woolen workers of Florence were most influential, "nè dei guadagni, nè delle perdite, e' mi conviene ragionare dello stato, e mi bisogna botarmi di star cheto, o ragionar di questo."



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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII, written to Francesco Vettori on the 9th of April, 1513, where Machiavelli says: "La fortuna ha fatto che non sapendo ragionare nè dell' arte della seta, nè dell' arte della lana," the silk and woolen workers of Florence were most influential, "nè dei guadagni, nè delle perdite, e' mi conviene ragionare dello stato, e mi bisogna botarmi di star cheto, o ragionar di questo."

one immersed in the studies necessary for the founding of a new science, and his sins, since sins we are bound he shall have, were sins of omission rather than of commission. Had he been less engrossed in the science of state, his energies might conceivably have made his family affairs more complicated and more prosperous.<sup>1</sup> It is, however, unfair to remember against him the unhappy and violent careers of his sons Bernardo and Ludovico.

~~We may now turn to the views of morality expressed or implied in our author's writings.~~ He may have read some few passages of Aristotle either in a Latin translation or in the original, probably the former; and his bold genius for innovation did the rest, always with the (to him) indispensable aid of Dante, upon whose intellectual inspiration we have found him constantly leaning. I say Dante's intellectual inspiration advisedly, because Machiavelli was obviously out of touch with Dante's intense religious fervor, as also exceedingly insensitive to Dante's purely poetical charm. This last observation is borne out not only by the unpoetical alterations that Machiavelli could make in quoting his favorite poet,<sup>2</sup> but also, and chiefly, because he seems never to have blushed at the badness of his own verses, written for the most part in *terze rime*, which are at one and the same time an unpremeditated insult to Dante's muse and a token of her hold upon Machiavelli. Devotional mysticism and practicable politics lie far asunder. In spite of his intellectual debt to Dante, Machiavelli knew where to stop and lacked both the capacity and

<sup>1</sup> See note 2 on p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> See note 2 on p. 115.

the inclination to follow the noblest and freest sweep of his poet's mind. He felt no call to sail those "chartless strange and most uncommon seas" where Apollo steers, Minerva fills the bellying sail, and Muses nine the pole-star show. In fact, the Florentine secretary was endowed with a most sensitive instinct of self-preservation, which invariably prompted him, when it was time, to part company with his poet. He was perhaps dimly conscious of being one of those warned off most melodiously when Dante, on the eve of slaking *la concreta e perpetua sete del deiforme regno*, cries out <sup>1</sup>

"O ye who in some pretty little boat,  
Eager to listen, have been following  
Behind my ship, that singing sails along,  
Turn back to look again upon your shores :  
Do not put out to sea."

To Machiavelli and all who act upon his maxim, preferring "to be taken in tow by the truth working its way through accomplished facts rather than to adventure after fictitious cases," <sup>2</sup> Dante calls out, "Put back, lest peradventure in losing me you might yourself be lost."

The sixth of Dante's letters, addressed to "those most infamous" Florentines within the city, substantially contains Machiavelli's message to Italy, constantly shadowed forth by implications and *obiter dicta* in his letters, reports, and dispatches, detailed in the minutiae of his *Art of War*, argued out in his *Discourses on Livy*, and finally delivered at the close of *The Prince*. "The

<sup>1</sup> *Paradise*. ii, 1-8, Longfellow's translation.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 14 and note.

helmsman and the rowers in the barque of Peter sleep," writes Dante, "and Italy, wretched, alone, abandoned to private rule, and destitute of all public government, is struck by a force of wind and wave so great that words cannot describe it; yea, even the unfortunate Italians can scarcely measure it with their tears. Therefore let the faces of all who with foolhardy presumption haughtily oppose this most manifest will of God—even though the sword of Him who saith 'Vengeance is mine' has not yet fallen from heaven—be overspread with pallor, for already the sentence of the severe Judge hangs over them."<sup>1</sup> Substitute fortune—the fortune which Cæsar Borgia, according to Machiavelli, always had on his side—for "the sword of Him who saith 'Vengeance is mine,'" read the policy of the Prince for "the sentence of the severe Judge," and this whole passage might be interpolated in the closing chapter of Machiavelli's *Prince*, where we read of Italy "in a bondage more grievous than Israel's in Egypt, more tyrannized over than were the Persians [before Cyrus], more dislocated than was Attica [before Theseus],—Italy without a head, deprived of every constitutional form, defeated, ravaged, slashed and gashed, and trodden

<sup>1</sup> Epistula VI, 1: "... nauclerus et remiges in navicula Petri dormitant, et quod Italia misera, sola, privatis arbitriis derelicta, omnique publico moderamine destituta, quanta ventorum fluctuumque concussionem feratur verba non caperent, sed et vix Itali infelices lacrymis metiuntur. Igitur in hanc Dei manifestissimam voluntatem quicumque temere praesumendo tumescunt, si gladius eius qui dicit 'mea est ultio,' de coelo non cecidit, ex nunc severi iudicis adventante iudicio, pallore notentur." The translation used is that of C. S. Latham, *A Translation of Dante's Eleven Letters, etc.*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1891.

underfoot,"<sup>1</sup> calling aloud for "un suo redentore," the Prince who shall surely come.

The difficulty is not to see in Machiavelli's case what the ultimate and governing motive was, — obviously it was patriotism. Devotion to the welfare of his people was strong in his nature, — a homely trait not incompatible with his memorable keenness of intellectual curiosity. Our difficulty — no small one — will always be to understand how Machiavelli came to think out such atrocious and ignoble means for the redemption of Italy by the Prince. How could he invest the coming political savior with so much of the cynical treachery and sardonic rage of the demons in Dante's Malebolge? Probably no completely satisfactory solution of this difficulty is likely to be discovered. How did Machiavelli satisfy himself that the Prince was bound, for the redemption of Italy, to do things from which, as the father of a family and a private man, our author himself manifestly recoiled?<sup>2</sup> In a word, how did he come to place his Prince above, or rather outside of and beyond, the moral law?

The partial answer to this question already attempted was briefly that Machiavelli saw Cæsar Borgia at work

<sup>1</sup> "... più schiava che gli Ebrei, più serva che i Persi, più dispersa che gli Ateniesi, senza capo, senz' ordine, battuta, spogliata, lacera, corsa."

<sup>2</sup> That he did recoil, for instance, from the morality of the eighteenth chapter of *The Prince*, when it was a question of his own private character for good faith, is amply shown by the closing words of his letter, dated December 10, 1513 (*Lettere Familiari*, XXVI), where he says: "E della fede mia non si dovrebbe dubitare, perchè avendo sempre osservato la fede, io non debbo imparare ora a romperla; e chi è stato buono e fedele quarantatrè anni, che io ho, non debbe poter mutar natura, e della fede e bontà mia ne è testimonio la povertà mia."

in the Romagnas, and was overawed by him in such fashion that he idealized his effectiveness, lending him powers that he lacked. Also the fact was insisted on that Machiavelli did not clearly distinguish between a political readjustment and a readjuster.<sup>1</sup> It has also appeared that Machiavelli saw upon the face of modern history — the only history which he really understood — such a blind war of evil and aimless forces that he conceived of respite and political peace for the people, as beyond their reach in modern times, save through recurrent political cyclones, the guiding force within which always wore, to the eye of his mind, the demonic lineaments of the Prince.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it will now be made plain that, in sketching in detail the lines of his portrait of the new Prince, Machiavelli was unconsciously carried away by a metaphor. He conceived of the hopeless political state of Italy as a disease of the body politic requiring purgation and the knife, and his Prince was literally the doctor. But he was a doctor whose science called into play, by way of cure, remedies which, had he conceived the disease to be less acute, even Machiavelli might have acknowledged to be deadly. Circumstances, the result in part of his training and in part of the extremities to which, in his day, Italy was driven, — circumstances and also an inherent but by no means extreme obliquity of intellectual temperament disqualified Machiavelli for seeing just at what point his remedies became worse than the political disease they were intended to cure. Hence the reader and the author of *The Prince* must at times stand at

<sup>1</sup> Cf. above, *passim*, and ii, 99.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. above, ii, 97 f.

cross purposes; for the latter attributes to his savior of society traits by which the former is irresistibly prone to recognize the enemy of the human race.

Before discussing further Machiavelli and his diagnosis of the diseases of the body politic, let us give our momentary attention to a volume entitled *The Boss: An Essay upon the Art of Governing American Cities*.<sup>1</sup> This little volume bears a slightly misleading title, for it does not attempt to grapple with the serious problem of municipal government in American cities, — it is simply an ingenious and ironically elaborated parody on Machiavelli's *Prince* worked out by substituting the modern "boss" for the Italian "prince." What chiefly strikes the reader of it, if I may generalize from my own experience, is the differences between the prince and the boss that Mr. Champerknowne is constantly obliged to point out. "The apparent rulers," says Mr. Champerknowne of the American city, "are indeed chosen by the people, but the boss is the true ruler by virtue of his courage and ability" [note that this last phrase is borrowed from Machiavelli, and does not suit the boss entirely]. "And he governs," pursues our author, "through the apparent rulers." This last statement made of Machiavelli's *Prince* would amount almost to a contradiction in terms.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> By Mr. H. Champerknowne, New York, 1898.

<sup>2</sup> The chapter of *The Prince* which ought to lend color to an analogy in this particular between the boss and Machiavelli's *Prince* is the fifth, where our author discusses "how to govern cities or principalities which before their seizure were governed by institutions of their own." But the most casual glance at it shows that it discusses situations absolutely irrelevant to Mr. Champerknowne's argument. This is still more



Mr. Champerknowne readily admits that the boss can have from the people none of "that awful respect which may enable him with greater ease to carry on the business of government." He says, "It is not wise for a boss to appear in great magnificence before the public, or to make great display of wealth in his manner of living. Princes," he admits, "are open rulers, but the boss is a secret one." We have, I think, only to work out this one point into all the details of administration and government in order to realize that the parallel between the Prince and the boss must completely break down,—is in fact hopelessly forced. Unfortunately, the one thing which could reconcile us to it is completely lacking; for it is difficult, if not impossible, to discover a point of view from which the American boss could be regarded as a renovator of the body politic, as an evil, monstrous indeed, but still necessary that good may come,—such unquestionable good as the putting down of petty tyrannies in the Romagnas and the final consolidation of a united Italy.

But nevertheless one may still be thankful to Mr. Champerknowne for his ingenious and workmanlike study. He has so clearly done the best that could be done, and yet failed in the attempt to picture the boss as a modern avatar of Machiavelli's Prince, that we can now assert with confidence that the boss impersonates

true of the twenty-fifth chapter of the first book of the *Discourses*, where Machiavelli maintains the thesis that "he who would reform the ancient constitution in a free city-state must perforce retain at least the shadow of its time-worn institutions," without touching upon any point of *relevance to the political career of the modern boss*.

at an earlier date Machiavelli was negotiating at Carpi to get a Minorite preacher for the Florentine Weavers Company, Guicciardini writes to chaff him about the sort of man he had selected, and says, "The fact is, you have such a reputation for holding views that are for the most part far beside the mark of ordinary minds, and for inventing novel and unaccustomed devices, that people are expecting you to bring back with you an unprocurable friar of the sort that can't be found."<sup>1</sup>

We see then that Machiavelli, though fond of all things extraordinary, regulated his modest and humdrum household and family matters in a perfectly usual and commonplace manner, and was really not very continuously absorbed by them. Their extreme simplicity, in fact, left him all but wholly free to expatiate himself, and, when he adventured into regions of political thought untrodden as yet by any of his contemporaries, he was hampered by few of the usual limitations of the head of a family. His intellect was emancipated and left to its own purely theoretical devices more completely than that of any more important political man of his day,<sup>2</sup> and he conceived of solutions in practical politics which could not have dawned upon one less untrammelled than he. On the whole, our author's private morality turns out to be just what could have fairly been expected from

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, L.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII, written to Francesco Vettori on the 9th of April, 1513, where Machiavelli says: "La fortuna ha fatto che non sapendo ragionare nè dell' arte della seta, nè dell' arte della lana," the silk and woollen workers of Florence were most influential, "nè dei guadagni, nè delle perdite, e' mi conviene ragionare dello stato, e mi bisogna botarmi di star cheto, o ragionar di questo."

There is small occasion for discovering anything strikingly immoral or unmoral in the line of action here suggested to Guicciardini. The notable point rather is Machiavelli's ability to detach himself from the simpler problems of his own family life, which required and received from him no such long-headed scheming. Perhaps it was a help to him that his own family affairs were of the homeliest and most straightforward kind, requiring him simply and solely to struggle on as best he could for a bare subsistence, to secure a fair education for his boys, and to keep them, their sister, and their mother from bodily harm and want. Thus his strangely resourceful mind was left all the freer to exercise itself impersonally and dispassionately upon such problems as offered themselves.

Throughout his correspondence there is one thing about which he is always the same, always keen, and always all himself, and that is the fate of Italy and the possibility of excluding from its borders the foreign armies of invasion.<sup>1</sup> Guicciardini, when he had Machiavelli's advice about the marriage question, complained that he was obliged to ransack the whole of the Romagna to get a copy of Dante, and then, having made a shift to find the passage quoted, could not understand it for lack of an explanatory gloss. "I fancy," he writes, "that this is just another of those out-of-the-way notions which you always have up your sleeve."<sup>2</sup> Again, when

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Lettere Familiari*, XXIII, XXV, especially *ad fin.*, XXVII, XXXVII, XL, XLI, LXIV, LXV, LXVIII, and especially LXIX, LXXI, LXXVIII, LXXXII, LXXXIV.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, LXIII, *ad fin.*

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to develop and explain his new attempts at drawing practical knowledge out of modern and ancient history. But we can only discover him to have been especially interested in one of them, — medicine. Although his father Bernardo, a studious man, was a lawyer, nothing in any of Machiavelli's writings either suggests that he cared in any way for the problems or solutions of jurisprudence, or inclines us to believe that he was at all versed in the law as studied in his day. Guicciardini was far more of a jurisconsult. On the other hand, there is much to prove that our author was constantly dabbling in medicine.

In one of his letters<sup>1</sup> to Guicciardini, Machiavelli strongly recommends a particular remedy for which he incloses the written prescription. He assures his friend that he has himself constantly resorted to this remedy, and this remark of his probably gave rise to the subsequent report that he died of an overdose of it. This last biographical detail is as mythical as Stephen Binet's account of a dream which visited Machiavelli in his last illness. In this dream our author is supposed to have seen a host of the ragged, the maimed, the halt, and the blind, and to have been told that these were the blessed in paradise. Next there appeared to him a concourse of grave men among whom were Plato, Seneca, Tacitus, and Plutarch. These he was told were the damned. Asked to choose his company, he is supposed to have said emphatically that he would far prefer to bide in hell and converse with these great minds about political concerns.

<sup>1</sup> *Lettere Familiari*, LVIII, August 17, 1525.

This dream, though *ben trovato*, is a palpable calumny, and the like is true of the far less well invented tale of Machiavelli's death by an overdose of his favorite pills. In order to explode this last piece of biographical mythology, the prescription has been made up and administered in recent years. It proved to be a very harmless and apparently useless compound. Thus we may make sure, if there had been room for doubt, that our author was guiltless of carrying about with him a sort of conjurer's remedy by which, wizardlike, he made sure of cheating death and defying the legitimate assaults of disease. The remaining residuum of fact is that Machiavelli's tendency to dabble in medicine was sufficiently marked to give currency to a number of gossiping tales, twisted, as everything concerning him ultimately was, into the form of a series of innuendoes against his morals and manners.

Our author probably had no very high opinion of the doctors of his own day, although, knowing his almost superstitious regard for all Roman instances, we cannot argue this from his declaring them, as we have seen he did, to be absolutely dependent upon the ancients. But his small opinion of them is shown in a well-known episode of his comedy, named *La Mandragola*, where a ridiculous drug figures so conspicuously in the plot. His friend Guicciardini was certainly inclined to hold the doctors of that day very cheap, for he declares that whether it be because of the difficulty of the whole matter, or because doctors will not take sufficient pains, being averse to scrutinizing minutely and noting down in detail every least symptom of the patient, the fact is

that "doctors in our time have only wit enough to cure the commonest ailments, and the whole of their science is exhausted by a couple of bilious attacks." "Your doctor," he adds, "is the most pestilential of animals, quite without conscience, and devoid of all consideration."<sup>1</sup> In another of his *Ricordi*,<sup>2</sup> the same Guicciardini declares that "although human states are mortal as human individuals are," states have powers of recuperation denied to individuals.

There is no reason to suppose that Machiavelli ever thought out in just this profound way of Guicciardini's the analogy between the individual and the state which he is always taking for granted whenever he likens the science of state to the science of medicine, and talks of disorders in the body politic in terms borrowed from diseases and discomforts of the human organism. If he had thought it out, he probably would never have carried it so dangerously far as he frequently does. At every turn he confronts us with it,—in the *Discourses*, in *The Prince*, and especially in his later work, his *Florentine History*, where the factions at Florence and elsewhere are constantly spoken of as peccant humors in the political body, with the implication that they must be worked off or purged out.<sup>3</sup> Machiavelli was a

<sup>1</sup> *Ricordi*, CCVI (*Opere Inedite*, I).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, CXXXIX. This is one of Guicciardini's very finest and deepest thoughts. Cf. also CLXXXIX.

<sup>3</sup> The most important passages in the *Florentine History* are III, i; IV, i, iii, and xxvi; but cf. also II, viii, xii, xvii, and xxxvii; III, xxi, xxv, and xxix, *ad fin.*; IV, vii, xix, and xxviii; V, iv; and VII, xii. The most startling of all Machiavelli's medical passages is undoubtedly in the *Discourses*, III, i, where he quite literally presses the application of

sedentary man, and when we can follow him from day to day, as during his second embassy in the Romagnas, we see him always just a little worried about his own bodily condition.<sup>1</sup> Hence we may with some confidence explain something of the eccentricity of his heroic panacea for political disorders by a certain marked tendency in him to hypochondria, aided and abetted, as this was, by the sort of violent remedies that were fashionable in his day.

The Prince's qualifications might have been tamer and their effect less drastic if the constitutional evils he was invented to cure had not constantly taken on in Machiavelli's mind the semblance of symptoms indicating organic disease in the human body. Warped though Machiavelli's mind seems to have been by these pre-occupations with medicine, his case is a very mild one compared to that of many a follower of his, most particularly of some who elaborated his science of state in England. Sir Robert Dallington, in the very first of his *Aphorismes*,<sup>2</sup> far outbids both Machiavelli and Guicciardini. There, in an astonishingly rose-colored review of

a medical dictum to establish his political axiom, that to be long-lived a state needs to be frequently so reformed as to lop off later accretions and return to its earliest constitution. Another cardinal passage is in the third chapter of *The Prince*, where a strict parallelism between incipient disorder in a state and incipient consumption is pressed home. Other important illustrations occur in the *Discourses*, I, xxxvii, "andò questo umore di questa legge così travagliandosi." Cf. also *Ibid.*, iii, vii, and lvii. It cannot be doubted that there is often a fallacious ambiguity in Machiavelli's use of the term "umore."

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 37 and 113 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Aphorismes Civill and Militarie*, for a full account of which see Appendix.



the flourishing condition of Italy before the invasion of Charles VIII of France, he declares the havoc wrought to have been much more desperate because the previous prosperity had been so great. "In naturall bodies," he says, "the longer they subsist in health, the more dangerous is the disease, when it commeth, and the longer in curing; as having none of those humours spent, which by distemper give foment and force to the approaching malady. So it is in bodies Politicke: when war once seizeth upon a countrey, rich in the plenties of a long peace, full with the surfeits of a continuall ease, it never leaves purging those superfluities, till all be wasted and consumed."

Let us now turn to Machiavelli's diagnosis of the disease in the corrupted body politic which called so loudly in his day for the knife and the cautery of the Prince. In the fifty-fifth chapter of his first book of *Discourses*, our author grows eloquent about a very problematical proceeding attributed by him to the Roman senate and army in respect of their gift to Apollo of a tithe from the spoils of Veii. He enlarges upon the solid goodness and sincerity of the Romans, expressing delight in the good hopes for a sound and steadily prosperous political future to be augured from such self-command and ready self-sacrifice. "And in truth," he goes on to say, "where there is no such soundness, there can be no hopes of good to come. Accordingly countries are past hoping for in our own day when they are palpably corrupt; Italy most of all, but France and Spain as well, — for these last two have also their share of corruption. That France and Spain show the disorders

of Italy in a far milder form hardly results from soundness in those peoples; for the more part they too have gone bad, but they have kings to keep them knit together. A king does this partly by his own efficiency, but largely also by virtue of the still unwrecked institutions of his realm."<sup>1</sup>

Machiavelli then goes on to describe, with an ignorance of detailed facts quite on a par with his account of the Roman tithes from the war upon Veii, what seems very like the collection of a rough-and-ready income tax in Germany. Without attempting to be at all precise, he makes out that each man, having fixed his own dues to the state and having taken his oath that such is the amount fairly due, conscientiously and without any sort of inquisition by authority pays the tax assessed by his own act. "From this," he says, "we may guess how much goodness and how much religion still survives in that people. . . . This excellence," he adds, "compels our admiration the more because in these degenerate days it is phenomenal; in fact, such a thing is unknown outside of that country."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "E veramente dove non è questa bontà, non si può sperare nulla di bene, come non si può sperare nelle provincie che in questi tempi si veggono corrotte, come è l' Italia sopra tutte le altre, e ancora la Francia e la Spagna di tale corruzione ritengono parte. E se in quelle provincie non si vede tanti disordini, quanti nascono in Italia ogni dì, deriva non tanto della bontà de' popoli, la quale in buona parte è mancata, quanto dallo avere un re che li mantiene uniti, non solamente per la virtù sua, ma per l' ordine di quelli regni che ancora non son guasti."

<sup>2</sup> "Donde si può conietturare quanta bontà e quanta religione sia ancora in quelli uomini. . . . La qual bontà è tanto più da ammirare in questi tempi, quanto ella è più rara; anzi si vede essere rimasta sola in quella provincia."

Germany,<sup>1</sup> he explains, has had small intercourse with other lands. Germans content themselves with such homely food and raiment as their native soil produces, and thus avoid evil communications, which proverbially corrupt good manners. In fact, the Germans here play the part assigned, in Dante's companion picture of the uncorrupted commonwealth, to the Florentines of the good old days. "They have not," says Machiavelli, "been so placed that they could possibly be corrupted or tainted by French, Spanish, or Italian ways. These nations one and all are the dry rot of the whole world, — *la corruttela del mondo*,"<sup>2</sup> he incisively adds.

To this negative reason for the high standard of political duty maintained in these free commonwealths of Germany and Switzerland — and, on the strength of some of his utterances, we might add England<sup>3</sup> as

<sup>1</sup> The Germans include the Swiss in the vocabulary of Machiavelli and his friend Vettori. See above, p. 69, note 4, and p. 78, note 1.

<sup>2</sup> ". . . perchè non hanno possuto pigliare i costumi nè Francesi, nè Spagnuoli, nè Italiani; le quali nazioni tutte insieme sono la corruttela del mondo."

<sup>3</sup> See a letter to Francesco Vettori dated at Florence on August 26, 1513 (*Lettere Familiari*, XXV), where, having explained that no miscellaneous mercenaries can equal "a people under arms" in fighting power, Machiavelli calls attention to the victories and defeats of Louis XII of France, and says: "Voi vedrete lui aver vinto mentre ha avuto a combattere con Italiani e Spagnuoli, e che sono stati eserciti simili a' suoi [i.e., mixed mercenaries]. Ma ora che egli ha da combattere colle popolazioni armate *come sono i Svizzeri e gl' Inglesi*, ha perduto [the disastrous rout of the French by revolted mercenaries at Novara took place three months before this letter was written, and was in Machiavelli's thoughts as well as in those of Vettori, who alludes to it in the letter to which this is an answer; cf. *Lettere Familiari*, XXIV, and also Machiavelli's account of Novara in *Discourses*, II, xvii], *e porta pericolo di aver a perder più*." The great defeat of the French at Guinegate in the Pas

well—he subjoins a positive one of weighty significance, as follows: “These commonwealths, wherein uncorrupted and genuinely political conduct still survives, will not suffer any man to live in the fashion of a gentleman; they are great sticklers for full equality, and vehement enemies of all such lords and gentlemen as their country contains; when by any chance such like persons fall into their hands, they put them to death. By way of making the term gentleman quite explicit, let me specify that those are called gentlemen who live in idleness and all abundance on their own resources, taking thought neither of cultivating their

de Calais, by the forces of Henry VIII and Maximilian I, which is sometimes called the “Battle of the Spurs” in allusion to the French retreat, had taken place ten days before Machiavelli wrote, and news of it can hardly have reached him. The last clause italicized, then, is a prediction of that defeat based upon Machiavelli's general military theories and his appreciation of the English and the Swiss. The panic caused by the “Battle of the Spurs” is vividly alluded to in the *Discourses* (II, xxx), where our author says “tremò tutta quella provincia ed il re medesimo, e ciascun altro giudicava che una rotta sola gli potesse tor lo stato.” He also speaks admiringly, in *Discourses*, I, xxi, of the boldness of Henry VIII's attack on Louis XII, citing the victory at Guinegate as “un esempio freschissimo.” (It was about three years old when the first book of the *Discourses* was written.) “Tutto nacque da esser quel [Henry VIII] prudente uomo, e quel regno [England] bene ordinato, il quale nel tempo della pace non intermette gli ordini della guerra.” In spite of this admiration, expressed after the fact, Machiavelli did not rate the fighting power of the English very high in 1513, as he shows in Letter XXV, quoted above, when he intimates to Vettori that Louis XII can recruit abundant infantry from his own people, adding, “e se non sono pratici come i Tedeschi, sono pratici come gl' Inglesi.” Possibly he was influenced by Vettori's scorn (Letter XXIV) for the French because they fled from the Swiss at Novara without showing fight, and were actually afraid of the English, “who have had no war for twenty-five years.”

land nor of any other laborious means of livelihood. Men like these are baneful in every commonwealth, but those of them are most baneful who, besides their general points of vantage just recited, are masters in strong castles, and have subjects obeying them. The Romagnas and the country about Rome and Naples are crowded with such lords and their subjects. Hence there has never been in those parts anything like a commonwealth, any approach to political life: men of this stamp are utterly at odds with every frame of civil existence."


Machiavelli repeatedly returns to the charge in his *Discourses* against what he terms the "lazy princes and the effeminate commonwealths" of his day in Italy; but his most telling picture of inefficiency in high places, of the utter moral and political bankruptcy of Italian princelings, is given toward the close of the last book of the *Art of War*. The nerveless effeminacy of the Florentine republic of his day is also constantly present in our author's mind, especially in the thirtieth chapter of the third book of his *Discourses on Livy*: The Romans of the republic, he there avers, never, save in one fateful case, bought peace with a money ransom or paid for acquired territory otherwise than with their personal prowess (*virtù*). "We notice just the contrary," he goes on to say, "in weak states. Take our own Florence," he adds, "in times past, when her reputation was at its zenith; there was never a lordling in the Romagnas who could not lay her under a money contribution." She was levied upon by Perugia and all her neighbors who should have "paid for her

friendship, not sold her theirs, if Florence had been armed and spoiling for the fray. Nor is this craven manage monopolized by Florence; the Venetians and the king of France have been just the same."

Then he proceeds to consider the failure of imperial Rome, — her disarming all her subject peoples and concentrating the power of arms upon her frontiers, where one defeat was often fatal and resulted in the payment of a heavy ransom to barbarian invaders. "Those responsible for such arrangements in ancient as in modern times have not perceived," he argues, "that this mode of procedure reverses every prudent counsel of constitutional order. The heart and the vital organs of a body must be kept under arms, not its extremities only. Life goes on, though even the extremities be severed; death ensues when the heart is slain. Yet these states leave their hearts unprotected, and keep arms only for their hands and feet."<sup>1</sup> Then he cites Florence and Venice as flagrant modern instances, specifying the panics and flurries caused notoriously in each by the passage near their gates of armies of invasion. On a recent occasion, he adds, this state of things would have ended Venice for good and all had it not been for her canals and the waters wherewith she is encircled.

The above passage, with its strangely particularized use of the metaphor of the body politic, where the capital becomes the heart and the frontiers are talked

<sup>1</sup> *Discourses*, II, xxx: "Perchè il cuore e le parti vitali di un corpo si hanno a tenere armate. e non l'estremità di esso, perchè senza quelle si vive, ed offeso quello si muore."



of as arms and legs, is one of many that bear out the contention that Machiavelli was forever haunted by the analogy between the state and the physical body of an individual man. Here it may figure also, because of the closing words of the discourse (II, xxx) in which it occurs,<sup>1</sup> to show how complete was our author's justification of the thesis that every frame of highly organized political being which he saw in southern and southwestern Europe was hopelessly corrupt, — the republican as well as the monarchical, the Florentine commonwealth and the Venetian oligarchy no less than the Romagnol tyranny and the wider principalities of Milan and of Naples, not to speak of the extensive monarchical realms of France and Spain. The chief reason for this corruption Machiavelli found in the universal disinclination of the people to pay with their persons for liberty and independence, — to fight their own battles after the Roman, the English, the Swiss, and the German fashion. His sovereign remedy for it was what he laconically terms the "armed people." He wished to make an end of mercenaries, and to introduce, in Florence and elsewhere, the practice that has come into such honor in the France and Germany of our

<sup>1</sup> "Vedesi pertanto, e per questo discorso, e per quello che abbiamo altrove più volte detto [cf. especially *Discourses*, I, lv, and II, Introduction, i and ii] quanta diversità sia dal modo del procedere delle repubbliche presenti a quello delle antiche. Vedesi ancora per questo ogni di miracolose perdite e miracolosi acquisti. Perchè dove gli uomini hanno poca virtù, la fortuna dimostra assai la potenza sua; e perchè la è varia, variano le repubbliche e gli stati spesso e varieranno sempre infino che non surga qualcuno che sia dell' antichità tanto amatore, che la regoli in modo, che non abbia cagione di dimostrare, ad ogni girare di sole, quanto ella può."

own time, — the compulsory requirement of universal military service. This startling anticipation of what the world was to come to long after Machiavelli's day, is argued for and triumphantly justified as inevitable in our author's *Art of War*. M.V.

Before he had written *The Prince*, the *Discourses*, or the *Art of War*, a practical opportunity was afforded Machiavelli, during six years (1506–1512), to make of the Florentines an "armed people."<sup>1</sup> This he had done after a rather lame and much-hindered fashion when the Spaniards attacked Prato in 1512. When the crisis came, these patriotic levies showed a most marvelous and memorable incapacity for fighting. Machiavelli himself alludes to what he calls "the cowardice in our soldiers";<sup>2</sup> and other authorities like Nardi and Guicciardini are even more emphatic. *The Prince*, be it remembered, was written within a year of its author's tragical disappointment in his high hopes for the "armed people," and the *Discourses* were begun along with *The Prince* and, for the better part, finished before 1516.<sup>3</sup> Thus a chronological coincidence probably played its part in determining our author's irreversible conviction that the Florentines and other Italians were past any

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 67 f. with notes.

<sup>2</sup> See *Lettere Familiari*, VIII, dated probably in September, 1512, and addressed presumably to Madonna Alfonsina, mother to the Lorenzo de' Medici who became Duke of Urbino. Speaking of the actual state of men's minds at Florence after the ignominious rout of the armed people at Prato, which took place at the end of August, our author writes: "cominciò ciascuno a temere dal sacco, per la viltà che si era veduta in Prato ne' soldati nostri." On the whole question see Burd's edition of *The Prince*, pp. 143 f.

<sup>3</sup> See above, pp. 75–78, and 110 with notes.



redemption save that of the atrocious Prince.<sup>1</sup> Having seen, in 1512, at Prato that the Florentines had neither fighting nor staying power, it is not surprising if in 1513 our author could portray *The Prince* with a lurking suggestion here and there by innuendo that he was in some vague way to be envisaged as a providential executioner, — as the one appointed by fortune to establish and maintain supremacy over the people in such manner as to make them smart for their ingrained poltroonery and for their general incapacity for resolution, law-abiding self-defense, and self-assertion.

"The greatest liberty of our kingdom is religion,"<sup>2</sup> said the patriotic statesman Pym, who led Puritans and Presbyterians without being of them; and something which is substantially analogous to this truth is the corner stone of Machiavelli's science of state.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Machiavelli strenuously objected to the course pursued at Florence by that fervid religious reformer Savonarola, a man whose martyrdom has won him such universal sympathy that it is difficult to be fair to those who, like our author, have the heart to criticise him sharply. As a young man, and also later on in certain

<sup>1</sup> He is not always of this mind about Florence, Siena, and Lucca. See above, p. 80 and note.

<sup>2</sup> Sommers Tracts, II, 154, *A Declaration of the Grievances of the Kingdom delivered in Parliament by John Pym Esq. 1642*. "The greatest liberty of the Kingdom is Religion; thereby we are freed from spiritual evils, and no impositions are so grievous as those that are laid upon the soul."

<sup>3</sup> Of course the agreement between Pym's and Machiavelli's respective estimates of religion in the state is confined to their appreciation of its importance. They both placed it first. See *Discourses*, I, xi-xv; II, ii; and III, i.

of his moods, Machiavelli did scant justice to the martyred friar. Yet Savonarola's fervid predictions of a speedy divine castigation sure to descend upon the feeble and effeminate Florentines blended, without Machiavelli's knowing it, with certain perfervid and prophetic utterances of Dante and clothed his mind with that elusive atmosphere of mystical fatalism in which at times his Prince may be seen to move. This, indeed, is the likeliest account of the hangman attributes so conspicuous in the Prince as he now and again emerges upon us out of certain of Machiavelli's narratives and argumentations. "Where men have little *virtù* (prowess)," says Machiavelli, in the thirtieth discourse of the second book, "fortune will always be reasserting her desperate prerogative; and, fortune being variable, republics and states are doomed to constant ups and downs. Indeed, they must have such vicissitudes until one arises so enamored of antiquity that he shall force upon fortune such restraint that no occasion is left her for manifesting the extent of her potency with every revolution of the sun."<sup>1</sup>

To see that Machiavelli could sometimes view this efficient lover of antiquity, this predestined savior of society and queller of the whims of fortune, in the light of a providential and bloody executioner pure and simple, we need only turn to the second book of his *Florentine History*, and read of the anger of the people against their magistrates when, in 1342, Florence lost ground in the war with Lucca. The people had appealed for aid to the king of Naples, and he sent

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 49-55, and 138, note.

them "Gaultier, Duke of Athens; and it was the will of the heavens," says Machiavelli, "of the heavens which were laying the train for future harm, that he should reach Florence just at the critical instant when the Lucchesan enterprise had ended in disaster."<sup>1</sup> The people insisted upon his ruling them for life, and he proceeded to oppress them in every imaginable way. "Heavy were the taxes he imposed," says Machiavelli, "and the judgments he gave unjust."<sup>2</sup> He confiscated warrants held against the treasury by merchants who had advanced money for the Lucchesan war. The old octroi duties he made heavier, and imposed new ones. His assumed strictness and fair-mindedness now showed as haughtiness and cruelty. Citizens were fined, tortured, and slain in the city; the peasants of the country-side were flogged and robbed. The duke and his minions were particularly atrocious in their shameless treatment of Florentine wives and daughters. Indignation thus provoked grew to hatred so intense, says Machiavelli, that the Florentines, "a people alike utterly unable to maintain their liberties and utterly incapable of submitting to slavery, were on fire with the determination to make a bold stroke for freedom."<sup>3</sup>

This episode of the Duke of Athens, as treated by our author, has recently inspired M. Gebhart's sparkling page<sup>4</sup> devoted to young Boccaccio's return to Florence in 1341-1342, and strikingly resembles, both in its details and its moral, the account given in the first book of *Samuel* of the anointing of Saul, the king clamored

<sup>1</sup> *Florentine History*, II, xxxiii (P.M.).    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, II, xxxv (P.M.).

<sup>4</sup> See the note on p. 152, below.

for by the people of Israel much as the Florentines clamored for the Duke of Athens. "He will take your sons, and he will set some to plow his ground; he will take your daughters, and your goodliest young men; and he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you."<sup>1</sup> To understand Machiavelli's final word about the Prince, we must consider this picture of the Duke of Athens. There, as elsewhere in his writings, we find clearly revealed a mood of Machiavelli's which, though not obviously consistent with the more striking features of *The Prince*, cannot safely be ignored by those who are seriously intent on grasping his real character. The portrait of the Prince is drawn in a treatise where there was only room for the broadest outline. This picture of the Duke of Athens really is required to mediate between the idealized sketch of Cæsar Borgia, which requires us to maintain that Machiavelli's ideal was grievously one-sided, and the consistent reverence inconsistently shown by him for republican Rome in the *Discourses on Livy*. When we once understand the mystical and religious mood of Machiavelli, we come nearer to seeing how the man who wrote *The Prince* could suffer in his own person stripes and imprisonment because he was viewed, without perhaps wholly deserving to be taken quite so seriously, as a defender of Florentine liberties.

But here again recurs the question, How came it that Machiavelli had such unmitigated scorn for the

<sup>1</sup> viii, 11-18, from the Revised Version, Cambridge, 1885.

typically religious reformer of Florence? To begin with, it seems probable that the scorn of Machiavelli's earlier days was more moderated at a later time than many allow; notably certain sayings against Savonarola, attributed to Machiavelli's latest years, appear to be apocryphal. The glaring fact, however, remains that Savonarola, perhaps unwittingly,<sup>1</sup> committed at Florence what Machiavelli regarded as the worst of all political crimes. Machiavelli taxes Savonarola with this in the forty-fifth discourse of the first book, where we may confidently look to find his mature and genuine opinion of that reformer. "Florence was reformed in 1492," says our author, "with Friar Girolamo Savonarola's aid. His writings prove him learned, of sound sense, and of resolute spirit. Among other institutions for confirming the citizens in their rights, he insisted upon a law providing for an appeal to the people from judgments pronounced in political cases by the Board of Eight and the Signory. He pleaded long for this law, and overcame strenuous opposition. But when, shortly after its enactment, it so fell out that five citizens were, for political offenses, condemned to death by the Signory, they were denied the right of appeal which they claimed under the law; and so the law was set at naught. Nothing that befell," says Machiavelli, "discredited the friar more completely than this. . . . If this appeal was a safeguard, he was certainly bound to see that it was allowed; if it was not a safeguard, he

<sup>1</sup> See Guicciardini's *Storia Fiorentina*, xv (*Opere Inedite*, III, 152-165), where quite a different complexion is put upon the whole episode, for which he makes Francesco Valori, not Savonarola, responsible.

was wrong in urging its enactment." Our author then drives the statement still further home by mentioning that in all his sermons after the denial of this appeal, Savonarola never either justified this flagrant breach of the law or inveighed against its promoters. In fact, Machiavelli implies that the friar was so lacking in rudimentary political sense that he never even realized the serious bearings of such violations of established law. He evidently classes Savonarola among utter partisans. This may be a truer estimate than Savonarola's eulogists will ever be willing to allow, but Guicciardini takes a more lenient view, leaving the whole question in doubt.

Religion, then, was deemed by Machiavelli, in his impersonal science of the modern state, to be an absolutely essential element of sound political organization. That being established, it is perhaps idle to ask what was his private and personal attitude toward the Roman Catholic faith in which he was born and bred. But still a word may not be amiss, since here again grossly unfair statements are in currency. We know that Bartolommea de' Nelli, Machiavelli's mother, wrote hymns to the Virgin Mary, which, it is said, she dedicated to her son Niccolò; and we have his grandson's categorical denial of all the curious stories maliciously invented about our author's demeanor when at the point of death. He was attended by a priest to whom he made the customary confession. He died as he had lived, a good professing Catholic.

Never in the course of his whole life does he appear to have denounced the abuses of ecclesiastical power so

strenuously as his aristocratical friend Guicciardini, who, nevertheless, spent most of his life acting as papal deputy in one province or another. It is astounding that Guicciardini's faithfulness as a son of the Roman Church has never been seriously challenged, although he wrote of it as follows: "Few could vie with my disgust at the ambition, avarice, and moral flabbiness of priests; of course each and all of these traits are ugly and detestable in themselves, but most emphatically they cry aloud in a man whose life is one long profession of dependency upon God. Moreover, these are vices so incompatible with each other that a man must be indeed a freak of nature in whom they all three consist together. For all that, the preferments I have enjoyed have forced me, for my private ends, to set my heart upon papal greatness. Were it not for this consideration, I should love Martin Luther as my second self. And this with no desire to disentangle myself from the illiterate regulations of the Christian religion as commonly explained and understood, but solely to see this rascally crew of prelates kept within decent bounds, — I mean forced either to renounce their lustful self-indulgence or to resign their power."<sup>1</sup> After this, Machiavelli's arraignment of the Church as having "deprived Italians of religion and of freedom"<sup>2</sup> seems almost mild, and there is little sting in our author's definition of prelatical principalities as "the only ones

<sup>1</sup> *Ricordi*, XXVIII (*Opere Inedite*, I), 96 f. Cf. *Ibid.*, CCCXLVI, 203, and CCXXXVI, 169 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Discourses*, I, xii. Cf. Guicciardini, *Ricordi*, XXIX (*Opere Inedite*, I, 97).

maintained without either prowess or good luck," and of ecclesiastical princes as the only ones "who keep hold of their states, but do not defend them; whose subjects are faithful, though they fail to govern them."<sup>1</sup>

It is noticeable that these objections of Machiavelli and Guicciardini are addressed to the abuse of temporal power, and can scarcely be classed as attacks upon the religion of Rome. In one particular, however, both of them went beyond criticism of the Church political, and, trenching for the nonce upon dogma, directed their attack upon the Church spiritual. The point which they both make is one, however, which was forced upon them by their conception of the impersonal science of state, not by any zeal for religion. According to Machiavelli's idea of it, which Guicciardini in the measure of his smaller capacities also shared, the science of state was neither pagan nor Protestant nor yet Catholic, but solely concerned itself with pointing out how religion might serve to consolidate political power. It might have been with the Roman poet Lucretius and his account of *religio* as superstition in mind that Guicciardini said, "It has been truly observed that excess in religion spoils this world of ours, because it womanizes men's spirits and diverts them from many a virile undertaking into the labyrinths of error."<sup>2</sup>

Machiavelli contrives to say the same thing with less antagonism to Catholic orthodoxy, — though he opposes to it a pagan ideal, — and at the same time with greater definiteness though without profundity.

<sup>1</sup> *The Prince*, xi. See above, p. 61, and note 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ricordi*, CCLIV (*Opere Inedite*, I, 174).




He argues that Christianity, with its life beyond, takes away men's fierceness. "Consider," he says, "the magnificence of their sacrifices; contrast with it the humility of our ceremonial, which is gentle rather than imposing, and contains no act of aggressive ferocity" such as the ancient deed of "bloody and ferocious sacrifice, coupled as it was with a magnificent ceremonial, and involving as it did the slaughter of many animals. The sight of this slaughter, being terrible, infected the spectators of it with the power of inspiring terror."<sup>1</sup> Here, then, we have Machiavelli's protest against the Christian virtue of humility, which he held accountable in a measure for the political paralysis of Italy, Spain, and France.

It is noteworthy that, in the scheme of Dante's *Purgatorio*, punctuated and set forth in high relief as it is by the several clauses of the Sermon on the Mount, only one of the Beatitudes is pointedly omitted, and that one is the third: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." For this Dante substitutes a subdivision of the fourth Beatitude: "Blessed are they who hunger after righteousness." If we may hold the poet strictly responsible for this omission, — and I am confident that we may, for he makes much of the first Beatitude, — "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," — then he also must stand in some measure convicted of the paganism of Machiavelli. By his silence he is pledged to declare with

<sup>1</sup> *Discourses*, II, ii. Cf. the *Art of War*, the end of Fabrizio's third speech from the last. Very little reflection is required to perceive that Machiavelli's psychology is wholly wrong here. Witnessing bullfights is certainly not the way to cultivate the virtue of bravery.

Guicciardini and Machiavelli that the meek shall not inherit the earth, — at least not in any sense which to them in their day seemed natural or congruous. Perhaps it is not in these days of partitions, hinterlands, spheres of influence, and newly assumed colonial responsibilities that either Englishmen or Americans would incline to be very strict with these three great Italians on the score of their neglect of the cardinal virtue of Christian humility, or to arraign them as the defenders of a revived paganism.

In regard to the temporal aspects of the Christian virtue of humility Dante agreed constructively with Machiavelli. Also Machiavelli, though influenced by Dante in his general conception of the mission of the Roman people, nevertheless suddenly parts company with him when Rome changes from a republic to an empire, and thus might seem, where the Roman emperors were concerned, to be entirely free from Dante's religious awe. [But yet, if we seek the ultimate ground of our author's conception of the Prince as a savior of society, wielding a power for the common good which often imperatively requires of him resort to deceit, treachery, cruelty, and the like, can we not detect just here a survival of the Roman habit of mind in imperial times, which deified the emperors and placed them and their political actions above and beyond the common laws of righteousness and justice between man and man? Here then, if anywhere, is the ultimate ground for the atrocities of the perfect Prince. After all is said and argued in favor of early Roman institutions, and in condemnation of imperial usurpation, Machiavelli has



to lean upon the pagan deification of the Roman emperors in order to uphold the chartered malefactions of the strong man needed to frame a sound modern system of government.<sup>1</sup> Here no idea of morals such as ordinary men must practice in their private lives could apply.

The maxim that the king can do no wrong was certainly not Machiavelli's invention, nor did it spring into being in Machiavelli's writings. It lurks behind many a page of Suetonius and Tacitus, and in the later days of the Roman empire became a part of the official religion. Certain incongruities involved at the last in the conceptions of several divinities of Greece and Rome resulted from the focusing of more or less crude local worships on this or that Olympian personality. Simpler and homelier ideals had been complicated and depraved when that latter-day revival of religious and political enthusiasms came which made the Roman emperors, personifying as they did the unity of the whole empire, into divinities worshiped throughout the Roman world. Nay, primevalism itself in Greek and Roman religion tainted the very Olympians with lusts, deceits, and cruelties. The divinized emperors were inevitably promoted to the same plane of unmoral being occupied by the Olympians. This whole view of the duties and privileges of the head of the state was finally adopted by Machiavelli, who takes it so utterly for granted that he does not argue out and justify the official aberrations of the Prince.

And now in closing, a bird's-eye view of the ground traversed will help. Machiavelli was indebted to Cæsar

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 40, note, 77, and 97 ff.

Borgia for ocular demonstrations of what strong measures could do for law and order. His mind was "cleared of cant," as the saying goes, and enabled to reach its startlingly independent conclusions only by a vivid personal impression; and from this primarily sprang *The Prince*, though some of the general outlines of the picture came as survivals of imperial Rome. The peculiar use which our author made of ancient history again was wrapped up in a very real way in the greatest hardship of his life, — the most vivid personal impressions of his middle age. The world he lived in and the government which employed him were both overturned as a result of the strenuous proceedings of the Switzers in Italy. Machiavelli's attention was riveted upon these doughty mountaineers just when he was spending laborious and unsalaried toil upon the study of Roman history. The Swiss sat for the portrait he gives of the Roman people in much the same sense in which Cæsar Borgia sat for *The Prince*. This remains true, although the general outlines of his view of the Roman republic were supplied to him by his careful study of Dante, whose Ghibelline point of view he largely shared. As to Machiavelli's idea of morals, it was more or less the conventional or mechanical one of a mind centered very strenuously elsewhere, and wholly absorbed by a new and difficult subject. It plainly never occurred to him that the entire omission of moral considerations in his new science of state would be a ground of offense. This, no doubt, was because he contented himself personally with the ordinary rules of conduct observed by average men about

him. He had no energies to spare for elaborating a code of morals for himself, and it did not occur to him that the Prince should be amenable to the conventional one to which he personally conformed. He saw the great people of his world habitually defying this code, and in discoursing about them his mind was still awed, in spite of the utter wreck of the Holy Roman Empire, by the divinity which hedges kings and which, by making the Roman emperors the objects of a politico-religious cult, emancipated them from the trammels of moral responsibility.

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The passage referred to on page 142 above is on page 70 of M. Émile Gebhart's *Conteurs Florentins du moyen âge* (1901), where, *à propos* of young Boccaccio's recall from Naples to Florence, the writer says: "Un duc d'Athènes, en chair et en os, plus difficile à vivre que le classique Thésée, Gaultier de Brienne, durant près d'une année pendit les mécontents, vida le coffre-fort des bourgeois, et leur enleva leurs filles. En quelques mois Boccace eut en raccourci le spectacle des agitations qui troublaient Florence depuis deux siècles: coups d'état, conspirations, émeutes, incendies, massacres et proscriptions, et du haut du campanile communal la clameur lugubre du tocsin. L'incorrigible jeune homme, loin de se convertir à cette vie nouvelle, souhaitait passionnément de s'enfuir à Naples." It is a rare experience to find the fiery thrill of Machiavelli's utterance subtly enhanced as it is in this compendium of his already brief account of Gaultier's short reign over Florence.

## APPENDIX

### ON VARIOUS SUBSTITUTES FOR MACHIAVELLI

A fashion for disjointed political maxims was certainly fostered in Europe by appreciation of Guicciardini and superficial condemnation of Machiavelli. In England, as late as 1657, we have Henry, Earl of Monmouth, translating the *Politicke Discourses* of that master of rigmaroles, the Venetian Paolo Paruta, against whose desiccating diffuseness there is no refuge save in flight. Here you have wisdom and maxims galore. Justus Lipsius again, though a man of undoubted parts, fell below his own standard when he allowed the success of his six books on *Politics*, and the rage for maxims, to betray him into the preparation and publication, in 1605, of his *Political Monitions and Models Concerning the Virtues and Vices of Princes*. This is not an important book, but rather a jumble of truisms long drawn out; but Lipsius does contrive to show his real quality when he says in his preface to the work first mentioned that no writer since Machiavelli is deserving of serious attention. In this he was right, whatever we may think of his right to say so. The flood of dismal commonplace which Lipsius thus disparages undoubtedly occupied the field of political science for a long time. It met a genuine demand and was used in the customary education of young princes. The writers involved were for the most part tutors of princes, and the market was obviously oversupplied. The new science of the modern state required new books. Plainly, it

Machiavelli's writings, where the first foundations of this new science are laid, had to be taboo, then we could only expect the early course of knowledge in that field to be strewn with wreckage. Many books bear out this statement, among which is Botero's deplorable *Ragione di Stato*, ushered in by a preface in which Machiavelli comes off very badly indeed.

Sir Robert Dallington knew Botero's book uncommonly well, and wrote of its clerical author, "he hath gotten the reputation of a notable lyar, and the note of a notorious flatterer." Botero's *Reason of State* is irrationally planned and unreasonable beyond reason so far as it departs from lines laid down by Machiavelli. Here is Botero's axiomatic definition of *subjects*: "Subjects, indispensable in kingdoms, are amiable or offish, stable or light minded, addicted to merchandising or to soldiering, of our holy faith or of some sect: if of a sect, they are either heathens or Jews, or schismatics or heretics: if heretics, they are either Lutherans or Calvinists or of some other suchlike impiety. Their badness is in direct proportion to the remoteness of their sect from the truth." After Machiavelli, the study of some sort of science of state was as indispensable to the education of princes as (in the system of Botero) were subjects to kingdoms, and this is a sample of the science or reason of state doled out by those who were shocked at the mention of Machiavelli and scandalized at the study of Tacitus. This fatuous volume, together with Botero's treatise on *Fortification* and on *The Agility of the Army of a Prince*, formed the staple of the political education given to the children of Charles Emmanuel the Great of Savoy.

Far superior indeed was the book, now unfamiliar, in which Sir Robert Dallington gathered together, after the fashion of Lipsius, but with far sounder sense, the lessons of history for the benefit of the sons of King James I of England. To begin with, the book is absolutely free from

any taint of Botero's pretentious cant and folly, and certainly has in it far more that a young man and a young prince could understand and take to heart than the *Politics* of Lipsius, or the same author's *Monitions and Models*. This last is worse than a merely foolish book in such passages as its prurient description of the Turkish paradise. The title of Sir Robert's book is *Aphorismes Civill and Militarie: Amplified with Authorities; and Exemplified with Historie out of the First Quarterne of Fr. Guicciardine*. The first edition was printed in 1613, the year after Prince Henry died, and is dedicated to Prince Charles, whose portrait at the age of fourteen is engraved opposite the dedication.

Sir Robert Dallington, born in Northamptonshire, studied at Cambridge and labored as a schoolmaster in Norfolk until out of his earnings he had laid up the wherewithal for travel. Dallington spent the year 1596 in Italy, especially in Florence, and this resulted in his *Survay of Tuskany*, published without the writer's leave by Blount, the editor of the first folio of Shakespeare. His travels in France during the two following years (1697-1698) gave rise to his *View of France*, published also without his leave, but by a less reputable man whom he subsequently disavowed. The device upon the title page of this unauthorized publication seems to connect Dallington already at that date (1604) with Prince Henry. At all events he soon became an intimate member of that prince's household, where he figures as plain Mr. Dallington among the knights and baronets on the list of "Gentlemen of the Privy Chamber in Ordinary." The *Aphorismes* are all that Dallington ever published under his own name and of his own free will. They had become doubly dear to him since Prince Henry, for whom they were written, was no more. "It was your brother's," he says to the youthful Charles in dedicating this book, which he calls "an epitome of Precepts from approved authors." "It was



your brother's, and sues among other his servants for entertainment: hoping under the impression of his worthy memorie, and Stamp of your gracious favor to pass currant." It is pleasant to reflect that the young Prince Charles was grateful for the wealth of learning and breadth of wisdom lavished upon his political education by Sir Robert, who owed to his second royal pupil not only the dignity of knighthood, conferred in 1624, but also the honorable post of Master of Charterhouse, obtained in that same year, and filled until the day of his death in 1637, one hundred and ten years after Machiavelli breathed his last.

Turning to the *Aphorismes* themselves, we find they are entirely of Dallington's own composition. Dallington's plan is somewhat like that of Lipsius in his *Monitions and Models*, and he himself says "to the reader" that his Aphorisms are not "so loose but that with Lipsius soder you may cyment them together, and make them con-center in the maine proposition." In spite, however, of this modest deference of appeal to a book which was hardly worthy of Lipsius, Dallington has greatly perfected the Dutch professor's plan. In place of Lipsius' jumble of haphazard examples from all epochs, our author has connected with each Aphorism an episode in Guicciardini's continuous narrative of events in Italy between 1492 and 1530. Moreover, the Aphorisms are so arranged that the events illustrating them are consecutively presented. Dallington's translations from Guicciardini are veritable transfigurations, and have no trace or taint upon them of the proverbial dullness fabled to have driven one desperate reader to choose labor as a galley slave rather than embrace the dread alternative of perusing the whole of Guicciardini's *Quarternes*. Sir Robert's citations from authors classical and other, made in connection with each individual Aphorism by way of circumstantial footnotes, are admirably adapted to win a young prince's

attention to the great thoughts of great writers. "I was the more plentiful in authorities," says Sir Robert to the reader, "because to read many and great volumes few young men have the will, no Prince hath the leisure." Dallington has not disdained to draw largely in the Aphorisms themselves upon the wonderful menagerie of unaccountable animals which diversifies the pages of Pliny the Elder. The *dolphin* diving under the crocodile to strike, the *puffen fish* found with a mullet in his belly, the *panther* that carries with him a sweet scent but an ugly face, and the *aspicke* that pursueth him that hurt his mate, — all these and more are brought in. "To the Aphorismes," says Sir Robert, "I have given some farce of illustration which falls not necessarily in the nature of the conclusion; but this I did of purpose to give them better relish in the dainty palate of a Prince, and to draw him on with the variety of his viands."

The presence of Machiavelli in Dallington's thought is at every turn most obvious. Sometimes he is in agreement, as with Machiavelli enlarging in the *Discourses* (II, xxxviii) on the political blunder of not resenting and punishing a manifest outrage whether the enemy be a state or an individual. Dallington says (III, xlviii), "He that bears one blow at an enemy's hand asketh another, and he that endureth one contemptible neglect from his subject shall be sure of many." Again and again we find Sir Robert sharply dissenting from the author of *The Prince*; or at other times he demurs to Machiavelli's lurid choice of phrase, as where, alluding to the "merciful cruelty" commended in certain cases by the Florentine secretary, he says, "There is a cruelty in some kind of mercy, though there be no mercy in cruelty." Sometimes Dallington takes an absolutely independent line, as in the discussion about fortresses; Guicciardini favored and Machiavelli condemned their use. Our author says of them, "A people should either not

deserve them or endure them, a prince should either not build them or keep them safe from surprisall." But in this very same Aphorism, Dallington might almost be translating from *The Prince* where he writes, "The best armor of prooffe and tower of defence to a prince are his virtues, if he command over loyal subjects." Machiavelli's account of the matter gives nothing about the virtues of a prince; but he does urge him to cultivate the loyalty of his subjects instead of building fortresses to overawe them.

Dismissing further comparisons in detail, since they would be endless, let us record the remarkable superiority shown, in comparison with Machiavelli, by Sir Robert Dallington as to the reading of individual character. He was not duped in any way or to any extent by any of the Borgias. Indeed, the Aphorism of his third book, wherein Dallington deals with Pope Alexander Borgia's consternation and evanescent resolution to amend upon receiving the ghastly intelligence that his elder son had been assassinated by his younger one, is well worth quoting entire: "Nocuments are documents," says Dallington, quaintly, but inimitably translating the *παθήματα μαθήματα* of Aeschylus; "Nocuments are documents, and great afflictions good lectures to reformation of life and manners. For the harder the pressure is with calamity, the deeper is the impression of our frailty and liableness to misery. But in a heart never moistened with the dew of grace, and obdurate with the continuall practice of wickedness and villany, they take no deep root. *Such mortars will still savor of the garlick.*" Just this last sentence could never have been spoken of a Borgia by Machiavelli. He was too much under the spell of their villainies, too much overawed in his simplicity by their vulgar display. He was also too much lacking in Dallington's genial sense of humor and in that sound breeding which lends the power of reading human character.

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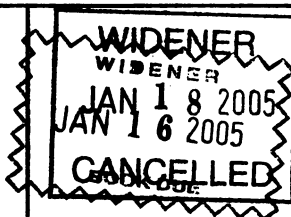




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